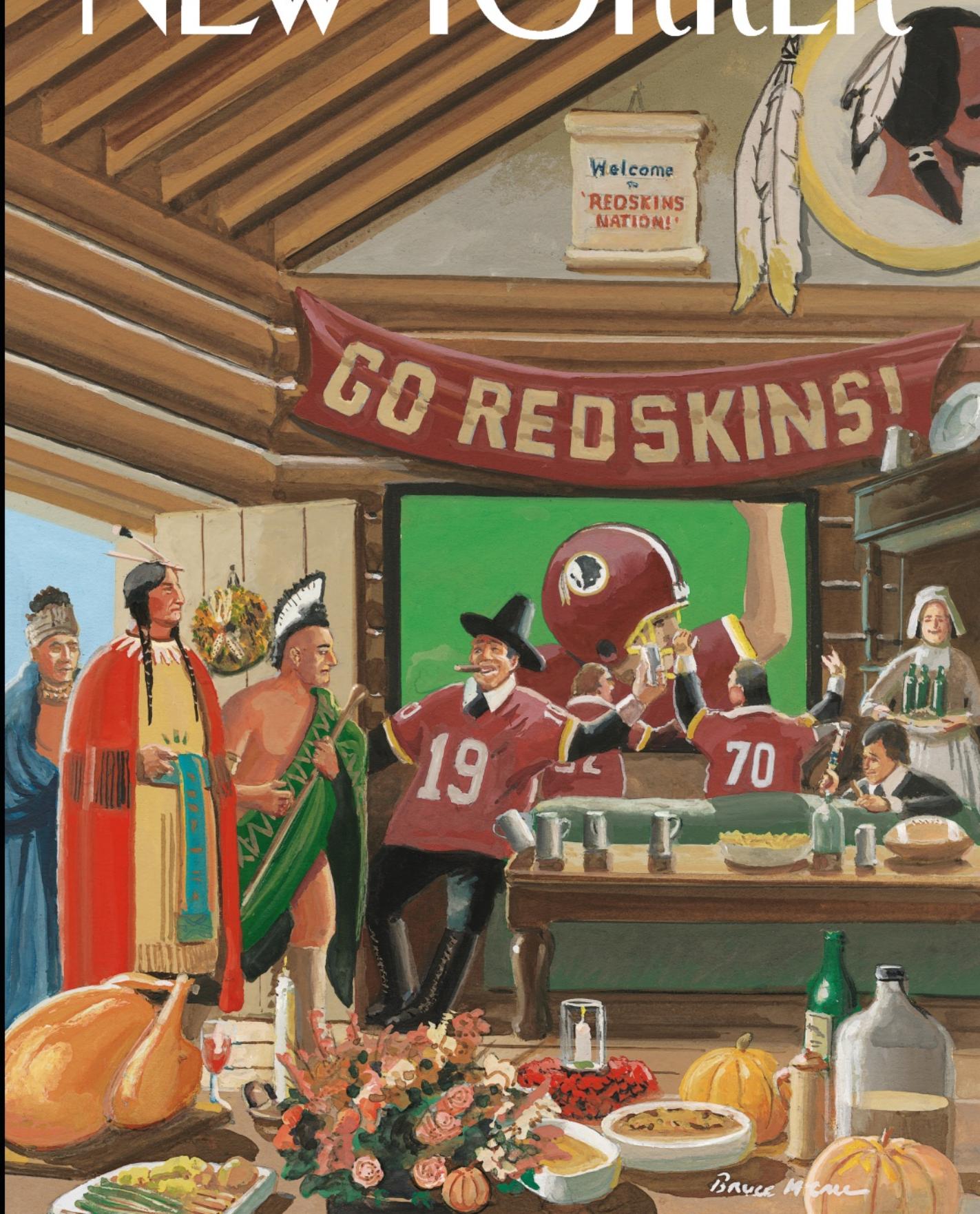


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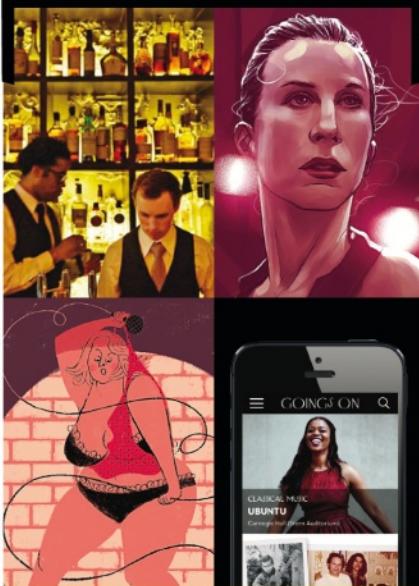
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# CONTRIBUTORS

**JILL LEPORE** ("THE GREAT PAPER CAPER," P. 32), a staff writer, is a professor of history at Harvard. Her book "The Secret History of Wonder Woman" has just been published.

**IAN FRAZIER** (SHOUTS & MURMURS, P. 39), a longtime contributor, is the editor of an anthology of funny writing, "Humor Me."

**JOSEPH MITCHELL** ("DAYS IN THE BRANCH," P. 40), who died in 1996, began writing for the magazine in 1933. The author Thomas Kunkel, while researching a forthcoming biography of Mitchell, learned of several chapters of an unfinished memoir by him, one of which is published here.

**SARAH LARSON** (THE TALK OF THE TOWN, P. 29) writes for the culture pages of the magazine's Web site and for The Talk of the Town.

**GEORGE PACKER** ("THE QUIET GERMAN," P. 46) has been a staff writer since 2003. Last spring, he was an Axel Springer Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin.

**ELISE PASCHEN** (POEM, P. 54), the co-founder of Poetry in Motion, is the author of several poetry collections, including "Bestiary."

**EMILY EAKIN** ("THE EXCREMENT EXPERIMENT," P. 64) is writing a book about contemporary medical culture.

**ETGAR KERET** (FICTION, P. 72), an Israeli writer, has a new book, "The Seven Good Years," a memoir, coming out in 2015.

**NICHOLAS LEMANN** (A CRITIC AT LARGE, P. 76) is the Pulitzer-Moore Professor of Journalism at Columbia, and a staff writer.

**BRUCE McCALL** (COVER), a frequent contributor of art and humor to the magazine, is working on a book about creativity, which will be published next year.

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# THE MAIL

## GLUTEN ANXIETY

We at the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness applaud Michael Specter for providing important information about celiac disease and non-celiac gluten sensitivity ("Against the Grain," November 3rd). We encourage anyone with symptoms or a heightened risk of celiac disease to get tested, and to keep eating gluten until the results come in, to avoid a potential false negative. As Specter points out, self-diagnosis of non-celiac gluten sensitivity is notoriously unreliable. The lack of diagnostic testing for gluten sensitivity, combined with the popularity of gluten-free diets and abundant misinformation about the "benefits" of eating gluten-free creates a Wild West effect, making it impossible for the average person to navigate the facts responsibly. A significant number of those who seek to reduce or eliminate gluten do so for perceived health benefits that are not currently supported by medical research. Celiac disease is a serious genetic autoimmune condition that, if left undiagnosed and untreated, can lead to catastrophic health consequences. For a person with celiac disease, eating gluten-free is no more a life-style choice than insulin is for a diabetic.

*Alice Bast  
President and C.E.O., N.F.C.A.  
Ambler, Pa.*

As a professional baker, I contend with evangelical gluten-free sermons every day. Specter is quite right to point out that the lack of scientific evidence will do absolutely nothing to dissuade the true believers—I've tried. Some years ago, I worked with the Celiac Society to develop recipes for gluten-free bread that actually tasted good. I quickly learned two things: alternative flours have become enormously expensive, owing to marketing and to unsubstantiated nutritional claims; and sugar is often added to give these bland concoctions flavor. Eliminating one ingredient that's known to affect legitimate celiacs and adding another with well-known health risks was not something I wanted to do. The distress that some people encounter after eating commercial bread has

less to do with gluten than with the way that large commercial bakeries operate. My breads are made using cool water, to maintain a low dough temperature; they are usually prepared with a short knead, then a stretch and fold during bulk fermentation (between two and six hours, depending on the formula), to develop the gluten. Once the loaves are formed, I place them in my cooler overnight for a next-day bake. This slows the yeast down, but not the enzymes and lactobacilli, which are busy converting grain sugars and starches into forms that people can digest. By contrast, large commercial bakeries depend on super strains of rapid yeast, steam proofers, bagged mixes with innumerable additives, and lots of heat to force the fastest possible rise. During the three-hour dough preparation, there isn't enough time for compound conversion. The next time you open a commercial loaf, take a whiff; you'll smell yeast and not much else.

*Jim Wills  
Prince Albert, Ont.*

I admire Specter's efforts to present a balanced view of gluten, even though he writes that he treats his sourdough starter "like a pet." He does not mention that Dr. Alessio Fasano, a specialist in gastroenterology and nutrition, has found that gluten stimulates the body's release of zonulin, which relaxes the normally tight junctions between intestinal cells which keep large protein molecules out of the bloodstream. This explains the increased intestinal permeability that is so frequently seen in autoimmune disease. As a gluten-avoiding physician, I would suggest that celiac patients consider a Paleolithic menu: with the variety in meat, vegetables, and fruit, there's nothing boring or nutrient-deficient about my dinner plate, now that the cardboard-like slice of bread has been removed.

*Deborah Gordon, M.D.  
Ashland, Ore.*

*Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to [themail@newyorker.com](mailto:themail@newyorker.com). Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter or return letters.*

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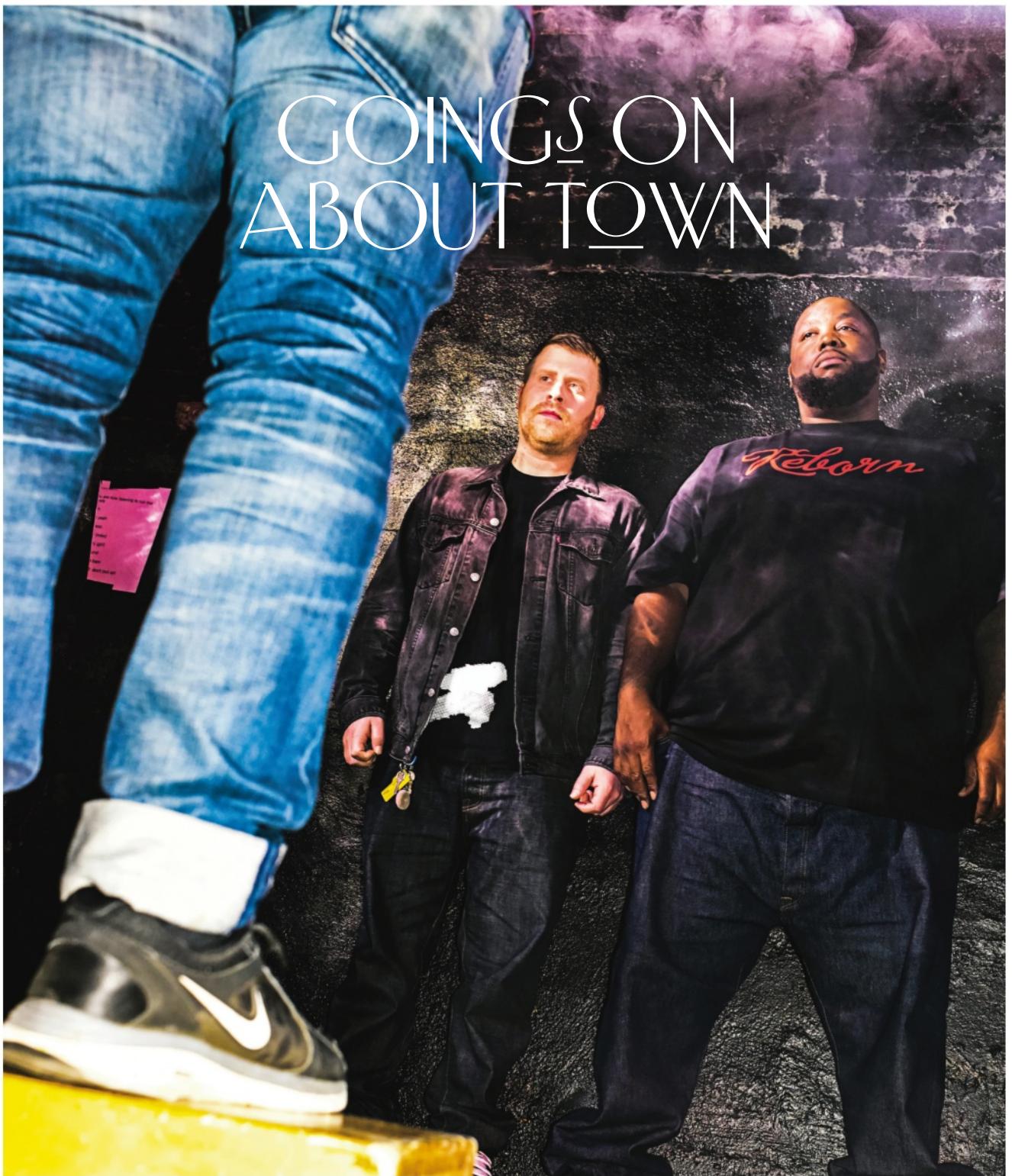
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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



NOV/DEC      WEDNESDAY      THURSDAY      FRIDAY      SATURDAY      SUNDAY      MONDAY      TUESDAY  
2014      26TH      27TH      28TH      29TH      30TH      1ST      2ND

**THE M.C. KILLER MIKE** and the producer/m.c. El-P make up Run the Jewels, a duo that released its second album this year. They became close in 2012, when El-P produced Killer Mike's "R.A.P. Music," and Killer Mike contributed verses to one of El-P's solo efforts. In 2013, they released the first Run the Jewels album and toured together. The pairing looks off, viewed through résumés. El-P is a Brooklyn native known for his gnarled, oversaturated hip-hop on independent labels, while Killer Mike is a rapper from Atlanta who once rode close to OutKast and has had major hits. Their success comes from a shared anger and willingness to fight. El-P doesn't much like drones, and Killer Mike isn't a big fan of cops. Actually, you could switch those names and the characterization would still be accurate—which is why they work so well together. Run the Jewels plays Stage 48 on Nov. 29-30.—Sasha Frere-Jones

MOVIES | HOLIDAY  
NIGHT LIFE | CLASSICAL MUSIC  
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ART | THE THEATRE  
FOOD & DRINK

PHOTOGRAPH BY DOLLY FAIBYSHEV

# MOVIES

## OPENING

### THE BABADOOK

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 28. (In limited release.)

## BEFORE I DISAPPEAR

Shawn Christensen directed and stars in this drama, about a troubled man who absconds with his young niece (Fatima Ptacek). Opening Nov. 28. (In limited release.)

## HORRIBLE BOSSSES 2

A comedy sequel, about three men whose failed business venture launches them into a life of crime. Directed by Sean Anders. Starring Jason Bateman, Charlie Day, and Jason Sudeikis; co-starring Jennifer Aniston, Jamie Foxx, Chris Pine, and Christoph Waltz. Opening Nov. 26. (In wide release.)

## THE IMITATION GAME

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In limited release.)

## PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR

An animated adventure comedy, directed by Simon J. Smith and Eric Darnell. With the voices of Benedict Cumberbatch and John Malkovich. Opening Nov. 26. (In wide release.)

## REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

## ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

“Essential Cinema.” Nov. 28 at 7 and 9:15 and Nov. 29 at 5: “Sunrise.” • Nov. 30 at 5:15: “Mother” (1926, Vsevolod Pudovkin; silent).

## BAM CINÉMAK

“Sunshine Noir.” Nov. 26 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: “To Live and Die in L.A.” (1985, William Friedkin). • Nov. 29 at 2 and 7: “In a Lonely Place.” • Nov. 29 at 4:30 and 9:15: “Straight Time” (1979, Ulu Grosbard). • Dec. 1 at 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: “The Limey” (1999, Steven Soderbergh). • Dec. 2 at 4:30 and 9:30: “Body Double” (1984, Brian De Palma). • Dec. 2 at 7:15: “Mike’s Murder” (1984, James Bridges).

## FILM FORUM

The films of Mario Monicelli. Nov. 28 at 12:40, 3, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50; Nov. 29 at 12:30.

## NOW PLAYING

### Exposed

This wild ride, directed by James Toback, stars Nastassja Kinski as Elizabeth Carlson, an unhappy college student who flees to New York and becomes a famous model. But her rise is tinged with cloak-and-dagger tension, starting with the opening sequence of a bomb attack in Paris, and the resulting thriller is also an exemplary tale of leveraging celebrity into politics. Harassed and abused by a professor (played by Toback), Elizabeth drops out of school and makes her way to New York (Toback savors the mean streets). Working as a waitress, she’s spotted by a photographer, and her life changes—and then changes again when she’s stalked by a concert violinist (Rudolf Nureyev) with a sideline in terrorist-hunting, for which he recruits her. Toback skips the details of Elizabeth’s success in favor of the high-stakes maneuvers in its shadows, and, back in Paris, the director unfolds a breathtaking bag of tricks as the violence ratchets up. Tensely pendular tracking shots and deft full-circle pans mesh split-second action with a repressed romanticism; after a tautly efficient car chase, the inevitable conflagration yields a majestic, paranoid stillness. Released in 1983.—Richard Brody (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Nov. 28.)

### Foxcatcher

A true story, and one that’s more worryingly strange than anything Marvel could dream up. Two muscular brothers, Mark and Dave Schultz (Channing Tatum and Mark Ruffalo), each of whom has an Olympic gold medal for wrestling, are approached and recruited by John du Pont (Steve Carell), who has incalculable wealth, all of it inherited, and a sinister passion for wrestling. Mark is keener than Dave, but both eventually succumb. Their patron offers to house them, train them, and fund them, together with a squad of their fellow-fighters; his motives include a longing for national glory, an awkward suppression of sexual drives, and a pitiful wish to please his elderly mother (Vanessa Redgrave)—who considers wrestling a “low sport,” and prefers horses. The director, Bennett Miller, wants the tale to tell home truths about money and ambition in America, and the disabling effects of both. Whether it has quite as much to say as he hopes—whether John, for instance,

might be just a one-off weirdo—is open to debate, but there is no doubting the dramatic pressure that Miller wields and builds. The result is solemn to a fault, low of light and mood, carefully photographed by Greig Fraser, with performances of a matching intensity. There are comic chances here, but even Carell spurns most of them, despite being armed with a formidable false nose.—Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 11/17/14.) (In limited release.)

### A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night

This tightly scripted, pictorially lavish, downbeat romantic fantasy—the first feature written and directed by Ana Lily Amirpour—is set in a desolate Iranian town but was filmed in California. The story begins with Arash (Arash Marandi), an urban-hipster type, losing his prized vintage Thunderbird to his father’s heroin dealer, who’s also a brutally abusive pimp. But a mysterious young woman (Sheila Vand)—a vampire who prowls like an avenging angel in a black chador—takes matters into her own hands and metes out justice. In the course of his own nocturnal rambles, Arash encounters the woman and a tentative, tenuous relationship develops. Amirpour’s wide-screen, high-contrast black-and-white images heighten the familiar mood of low-rent high style, but her greater gift is choreography: she ramps up suspense through the actors’ sinuous glides and dreamlike stillness, and she conjures magic with the rhythms of a few striking cuts. The fablelike drama offers a powerful symbolic display of feminine power and outlaw charm; one scene, involving a young boy whom the vampire terrifies, suggests a Woody Allen-like dark comedy that promises a lifetime of neuroses and the new generation’s gender wars. In Farsi.—R.B. (In limited release.)

### Happy Valley

Amir Bar-Lev’s mesmerizing documentary about the child-abuse scandal at Pennsylvania State University evokes and interprets (through the juxtaposition of interviews and other footage) the atmosphere in State College that allowed Jerry Sandusky, Penn State’s assistant coach for decades, to prey on young boys—and to continue doing so even after his activities were known to university officials, including his boss, Joe

Paterno, the head coach. As Bar-Lev demonstrates, the coaches were given a quasi-religious sanctification by a community enthralled by football. And, after Sandusky and Paterno leave, the community quickly becomes enthralled again. The film features an extensive interview with Matt Sandusky, who describes how Jerry Sandusky rescued him from poverty, adopted him, and then gradually seduced him. Married and with four children, Matt Sandusky has survived a betrayal beyond compare. Many of the other interviewees, who are mainly impatient for the scandal to pass, are not as admirable.—David Denby (11/24/14) (In limited release.)

### The Homesman

Tommy Lee Jones directs and stars in a new Western; its direction of travel is easterly, however, and the pioneering spirit is all but snuffed out. He plays a ne’er-do-well named George Briggs, saved from the gallows by a dauntless spinster, Mary Bee Cuddy (Hilary Swank), who needs a helper as she drives a wagon to Hebron, Iowa. Her cargo consists of three wives driven insane by conditions in the Nebraska Territory, where crops have failed and children have died. From these bleak elements, Jones has fashioned a typically patient piece of work; as in “The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada” (2005), he finds time for patches of genuine whimsy, as well as for narrative twists designed not for the sake of cleverness but in tribute to the cussedness of fate. The poor madwomen are given almost no voice at all, yet female presences dominate the film; Meryl Streep has a finely judged cameo toward the end, while Swank—who, as usual, has waited a few quiet years before delivering another performance of true grit—is evidently made of tougher stuff than the men around her.—A.L. (11/17/14) (In limited release.)

### In a Lonely Place

Nicholas Ray’s melodrama, from 1950, is one of the darkest, harshest, and most devastating love stories ever made. It’s an inside-Hollywood story, starring Humphrey Bogart as Dixon Steele, a gifted screenwriter with a mean streak. Dixon meets his dream woman, Laurel Gray (Gloria Grahame), a fledgling actress, the very night that another woman he was with is found murdered, and he comes under suspicion. The clash of movie-world

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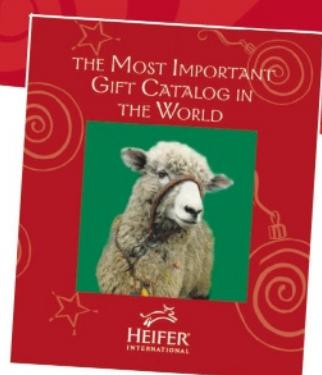


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5:40, 7:50 and 10; and Dec. 1 at 3:15: "Big Deal on Madonna Street" (1958). • Nov. 30 at 2:45 and 8 and Dec. 1 at 12:30 and 5:30: "The Organizer." • Dec. 2 at 3 and 5:45: "Lady Liberty" (1971). • "Adolph Green's 100th." Dec. 1 at 8:10: "The Band Wagon" (1953, Vincente Minnelli).

#### FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

The films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Nov. 26 at 8:30: "Querelle." • "Nastassja Kinski: From the Heart." • Nov. 27 at 3 and Nov. 29 at 4: "Tess" (1979, Roman Polanski). The Nov. 29 screening will be followed by a Q. & A. with Kinski. • Nov. 27 at 6:30 and Dec. 3 at 4:30: "One from the Heart" (1982, Francis Ford Coppola). • Nov. 27 at 8:45 and Dec. 3 at 9:30: "Cat People" (1982, Paul Schrader). • Nov. 28 at 8:30: "Exposed," followed by a Q. & A. with the director, James Toback. • Nov. 29 at 8:30: "Faraway, So Close!" (1993, Wim Wenders).

#### FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

In revival. Dec. 2 at 4 and 7:30: "Stranger by the Lake" (2013, Alain Guiraudie).

#### MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"The Contenders." Nov. 26 at 7:30: "Manakamana" (2013, Stephanie Spray and Pacho Velez). • Nov. 30 at 2: "Boyhood" (2014, Richard Linklater), followed by a discussion with Ethan Hawke and the director. • Nov. 30 at 6:30: "Snowpiercer" (2013, Bong Joon-ho), followed by a discussion with Tilda Swinton. • Georgian cinema. Dec. 1 at 4: "The Legend of Suram Fortress" (1985, Sergei Parajanov and Dodo Abashidze).

#### MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

"See It Big! Animation." Nov. 29 at 1: "Fantastic Mr. Fox" (2009, Wes Anderson). • Nov. 30 at 7:30: "Waking Life" (2001, Richard Linklater). • The films of Jean Grémillon. Nov. 29 at 3: "Dainah la Métisse" (1932). • Nov. 30 at 3: "June 6th at Dawn" (1943). • Nov. 20 at 5:30: "The Strange Monsieur Victor" (1938).



#### MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Raoul Walsh's "The Man I Love," from 1947, in our digital edition and online.

scandal with local politics gives the passionate affair a broad backdrop, as does Ray's fervent depiction of fragile, high-strung artists caught between love and work. Ray—who was married to Grahame at the time—endows the couple's intimate moments with a bittersweet ardor (which gives rise to a love scene in which Dixon describes how he writes love scenes). The stars are joined by a superb batch of character actors, in such roles as a sentimental agent and a Falstaffian thespian, in sequences that play like bruising chamber music, with two-person face-offs, triangular confrontations, and jousting quartets. Few movies suggest such a forthright flaying of their director's soul.—R.B. (BAM Cinématheque; Nov. 29.)

#### Interstellar

In Christopher Nolan's new spectacle, the Earth has had it, and a team of scientist-astronauts (led by Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway) travel through a wormhole and into distant galaxies, seeking planets on which humanity may be able to exist. Moving through the altered space-time continuum, the crew members snap at each other testily, making use, in passing, of Einstein's theories, as well as speculations by Stephen Hawking and Kip Thorne. Black holes, relativity, singularity, the fifth dimension! The talk is grand but delivered in a rush, and, in competition with Hans Zimmer's swelling music, it hardly functions in the story, even though it's central to the action. The film is a grandiose, redundant puzzle, sometimes beautiful and moving; in the best scene, the crew returns from a brief jaunt away from their craft only to discover that, on Earth, more than twenty years have passed. McConaughey's young daughter, now a woman (played by Jessica Chastain), confronts him on video, fighting and loving at the same time. The movie's message seems to be: To hell with the Earth—love will hold us together. With Michael Caine, Wes Bentley, Matt Damon, Mackenzie Foy, and David Gyasi. Bill Irwin provides the voice of a querulous robot.—D.D. (11/10/14) (In wide release.)

#### The Organizer

A nearly forgotten near-great movie, with one of Marcello Mastroianni's classic tragicomic performances. Without any taint of sentimentality, he creates moments of Chaplinesque farce and poignancy as a former academic who rides into turn-of-the-century Turin on a freight train, wearing pince-nez and rags, and proceeds to galvanize the workers at a textile mill. He's part absent-minded professor and part ramrod, a humane intellectual but also a political animal ready to steel his forces for a prolonged strike and to exploit their martyrdom. The director, Mario Monicelli, employs his knack for ensemble comedy-drama to draw you into the plight of the individual

factory hands, who include the veteran character actor Folco Lulli and the vivid young Renato Salvatori. The team of Age and Scarpelli collaborated with Monicelli on the script; Giuseppe Rotunno did the masterly black-and-white cinematography, which is as evocative as old lithographs. Released in 1963. In Italian.—Michael Sragow (Film Forum; Nov. 30-Dec. 1.)

#### Querelle

The director Rainer Werner Fassbinder's last and posthumously released feature, from 1982—an adaptation of a novel by Jean Genet—is a bold cinematic renewal by way of an exalted tangle of sex and violence. Brad Davis stars in the title role, as a sailor whose ship pulls into the port of Brest. Disembarking, he plunges into the town's seamy underworld, which revolves around a bar run by the singer Lysiane (Jeanne Moreau) and a brothel run by her husband, Nono (Günther Kaufmann). In his nocturnal knockabouts, Querelle kills a man, and submits to Nono's desires as if to punishment. Fassbinder films the ensuing spiral in stylized wide-screen images on theatrical, blatantly artificial sets, and he gives his actors a frozen declamation and stylized choreography to match. The teeming cast of characters fight for power and pleasure while decked out in whimsical costumes and lit in garish colors amid ornate décor; the film's literary roots show through in florid voice-overs and intertitles. Fassbinder's heightened, brazen modernity points to new and influential paths that he didn't live to take.—R.B. (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Nov. 26.)

#### Rosewater

In the best part of Jon Stewart's first film as a director, a real-life journalist, Maziar Bahari (Gael García Bernal), thrown into an Iranian prison in 2009 during a national election, is relentlessly tormented by a secret-police agent (Kim Bodnia), who wants Bahari to "confess" to being a Western spy (the Iranians have chosen to misunderstand a joking interview that Bahari gave with Jason Jones, from "The Daily Show"). As Bahari sits in a chair, with a black blindfold covering his eyes, his interrogator lingers over his neck as if about to plant a kiss or take a bite. Stewart puts the two of them in a very tight frame, Bodnia smiling happily like a pleased headwaiter and Bernal sweating and trembling. The peculiar communion of torturer and victim has never been dramatized with such creepy immediacy. The rest of the movie, with its scrappy crowd scenes and overly explicit dialogue, lacks ease and mystery—what might be called authority. What comes through strongly, however, is the satirist's belief that a government without humor is capable of the greatest tyrannies. Based on actual events and on Bahari's book, "Then They Came for Me." Filmed

in Amman, Jordan.—D.D. (11/24/14) (In limited release.)

#### The Story of My Death

Though quiet in tone and contemplative in manner, Albert Serra's historical drama, set in a Swiss villa and a Balkan estate, far from royal courts and teeming cities, brings exotic passions of the eighteenth century to furious life. An unnamed aristocrat getting on in years, periwigged and pomaded, speaks with a connoisseur's insight and a scientist's skepticism on matters of love and politics, society and nature. Anticipating a revolution in France, discussing the sexual license of the Catholic Church, unfolding the art of seduction, this quasi-Casanova—played with dialectical intensity and spidery focus by Vicenç Altaíó—outlines the subjects for his planned memoir. Meanwhile, he uninhibitedly pursues carnal pleasures, underlining erotic glee with crazed laughter and desperate tears. But, along with his obsessive attention to bodily functions, there will be blood, and his curiosities fuse the empirical with the vampirical. Filming in spare settings dominated by velvety light and hidden sounds—wind and birdsong, footfalls and the crunch of chewed food—Serra creates rigid, highly pressurized images on the verge of shattering with the force of mystery and desire. In Catalan.—R.B. (Anthology Film Archives.)

#### Sunrise

For his Hollywood début, in 1927, the German director F. W. Murnau brought a slender story to life with a breathtaking display of cinematic virtuosity, creating one of the masterworks of the art form. The archetypal tale concerns a farmer (George O'Brien) who is caught in the erotic grip of his sleek and scheming urban mistress (Margaret Livingston). He takes his wife (Janet Gaynor) on a rowboat ride in order to do away with her, but he can't follow through; when they reach shore, the horrified innocent flees, and he penitently pursues her to a picturesque reconciliation in the big city. The astonishing visual transition of the broken couple's arrival, by trolley car, in the metropolitan swarm is matched by the overwhelming design of the city itself—complete with streetcars, traffic jams, and the varied attractions of a teeming amusement park—which gives rise to meticulously staged set pieces and a mercurial range of emotions. By showing no particular city, Murnau captures the essence of urban life; by depicting a generic love story, he conjures love in itself. Thus, from the wisp of a tale, he raises cinema to the heights of philosophical speculation—and, at the same time, renders palpable the joy of an unrivaled inventiveness, the miracle of the medium's power. Silent.—R.B. (Anthology Film Archives; Nov. 28-29.)

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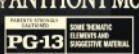
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

# CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS



## Handel's "Messiah"

The men-and-boys choir of St. Thomas Church, under the expert leadership of John Scott, provides impeccable performances in the Anglican tradition, with the period-instrument ensemble Concert Royal. Kent Tritle, New York's leading choral conductor, leads back-to-back concerts at Carnegie Hall, with two of the groups that he directs—each with a distinguished history. Expect a hearty and affirmative reading from the massed singers of the Oratorio Society of New York and, on the following night, a firmly elegant account from the professional choristers of Musica Sacra. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. [saintthomaschurch.org](http://saintthomaschurch.org). Dec. 9 and Dec. 11 at 7:30. • 212-247-7800. Dec. 22 at 8 and Dec. 23 at 7:30.)

## "The Nutcracker"

This is American Ballet Theatre's final New York run of Alexei Ratmansky's "Nutcracker" before the production heads west. Ratmansky's imaginative version bursts with color and kaleidoscopic ensembles, but there's also a sense of danger, suggesting the turbulent emotions of its adolescent heroine. New York City Ballet performs the familiar version by George Balanchine, from 1954. Balanchine's heroine is younger, her world cozier. In the Gelsey Kirkland Ballet's stately new "Nutcracker" (2013), the confectioner's paradise is replaced by a celestial court, elegantly accoutred with sets acquired from the defunct New York City Opera, and Kirkland's heroine dances on pointe. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 12-21. • David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Nov. 28-Jan. 3. • Schimmel Center for the Arts, Pace University, 3 Spruce St. 866-811-4111. Dec. 11-21.)

## The Brandenburg Concertos

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center offers a whole slate of Baroque-themed concerts in December, but its annual performances of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos remain essential. This year's roster includes the New York Philharmonic's principal flutist, Robert Langevin, as well as Lawrence Dutton and Paul Watkins, from the Emerson String Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. Dec. 12 and Dec. 16 at 7:30 and Dec. 14 at 5.)

## "Peter and the Wolf"

Isaac Mizrahi brings Prokofiev's musical menagerie to life in this story of a boy who wanders into a meadow, despite his grandfather's warnings about the dangers that lie there. Mizrahi is a wry narrator; the music, played by Ensemble Signal, is a delight, and a marvellous introduction to the instruments of the orchestra; and John Heginbotham's clever choreography for the show fits in well with the witty yet sincere tone.

(Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 88th St. 212-423-3575. Dec. 6-7 and Dec. 12-14.)

## Christmas at the Morgan

The Morgan Library & Museum continues an annual tradition, exhibiting the original manuscript for Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol." It also hosts a show of five dozen holiday cards, handmade by American artists including Alexander Calder, Helen Frankenthaler, and Saul Steinberg, from the archives of the Smithsonian. (225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. Through Jan. 11.)

## Chanticleer

For years, they reigned at the Met Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall, but now the singers of the eminent San Francisco men's chorus have a new home in the city at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola. Their program offers a heartwarming mix of carols, spirituals, and contemporary holiday works. (Fifth Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Dec. 5 at 7 and Dec. 7 at 4.)

## "Make Music Winter"

The fourth annual music festival in which attendees are as much a part of the show as the headliners takes place on the solstice. Fiddlers will be heading down Flatbush Avenue, thumb-piano players will be gathering in McCarron Park, and bell-wielding bicyclists will be circling Prospect Park. Classical events include a performance by the baritone Christopher Dylan Herbert, who will be leading a participatory version of Franz Schubert's 1828 song cycle, "Winterreise," while wandering through the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. (Dec. 21. [makemusicny.org](http://makemusicny.org).)

## Holiday Train Show

The iconic Unisphere, from the 1964 New York World's Fair, rendered in wood, twigs, and bark, is a special highlight of the latest version of this annual tradition at the New York Botanical Garden. Old favorites, such as the long-lost Pennsylvania Station, St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the Brooklyn Bridge, round out the display of more than a hundred and fifty landmarks in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. G-gauge equipment (some cars and engines are more than two feet long) runs on a quarter mile of track, and there are poetry readings, concerts, and cocktails at special times. ([nybg.org](http://nybg.org). Through Jan. 19.)

## "Chanukah on Ice"

On the first night of the holiday, Dec. 16, Central Park's Wollman Rink becomes a site of revelry, with kosher food, skating to the strains of the Ta Shma Orchestra, and a giant menorah made of ice. ([chanukahonicerink.com](http://chanukahonicerink.com).)

## "Gotham Holiday Swing"

The inimitable bandleader Vince Giordano (who handles the music on HBO's "Boardwalk Empire" and appears on the show) and his Nighthawks orchestra are the foundation of this old-fashioned variety show at Town Hall. Stars from the worlds of music, comedy, dance, and beyond join them, including Ira Glass, Monica Bill Barnes, and Anna Bass; Buster Poindexter; Regina Carter; Pedrito Martinez; Sofia Rei; Bria Skonberg; the Xylopholks; and Molly Ryan. ([thetownhall.org](http://thetownhall.org). Dec. 19.)

## "The Shop Around the Corner"

Though buying and selling is the prosaic part of the holiday season, one of the most poetic Hollywood romances blooms among price tags on Christmas Eve in this 1940 comedy, screening at Film Forum Dec. 25-31. James Stewart and Margaret Sullavan star as clerks at a Budapest leather-goods store. As war began in Europe, the director Ernst Lubitsch conjured an Old World charm that would soon be lost forever. (W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave., 212-727-8110.)

## Holiday Trees

Since 1964, the Metropolitan Museum has been decorating its holiday tree with eighteenth-century angels from Naples: exquisite polychrome figurines, robed in silk, with terra-cotta faces and wings carved of wood. For the American Museum of Natural History, volunteers around the world, from the Upper West Side to Japan, have been folding origami since the summer to create hundreds of ornaments based on displays in its halls, from a sabre-toothed tiger to a pterosaur. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. Through Jan. 6. • Central Park W. at 79th St. Through Jan. 12.)

## Sounds of the Season

Spottiswoode is an English singer-songwriter with a burly baritone and a wry downtown sensibility, thanks to his many years living here. On Dec. 4, he rounds up his band, the Enemies, for a "New York Christmas Extravaganza" at the Rockwood Music Hall. Who's on top in pop music changes faster than a six-year-old revising a letter to Santa, but one thing is always certain: the Z100 Jingle Ball will have the biggest talent of the moment. Last year, it was Miley Cyrus who stole the show. This year, the star is Taylor Swift. She'll be joined on Dec. 12 at Madison Square Garden by, among many others, Pharrell, Maroon 5, Iggy Azalea, Ariana Grande, and 5 Seconds of Summer. If those names confuse you, find a six-year-old to ask. Plus, the questing Jewish reggae performer Matisyahu brings his annual "Festival of Light" show to the Best Buy Theatre, on Dec. 20. ([spottiswoode.com](http://spottiswoode.com) • [z100.com](http://z100.com) • [matisyahuworld.com](http://matisyahuworld.com).)

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# NIGHT LIFE



Andrew Fearn and Jason Williamson create the musical equivalent of a hard, unfiltered spotlight.

## MOD SQUAD

*Noise out of Nottingham.*

JASON WILLIAMSON WAS BORN forty-four years ago in Grantham, England. For the past eighteen years, he's lived a few miles to the west, in Nottingham, and his origins bleed into his songs. His band, Sleaford Mods, is more accurately described as two people who make noise together. Williamson used to sing rock and folk, but it wasn't his passion. As he puts it, "I used to be in bands, fuckin' hated it." Live, he speaks his lyrics loudly, while Andrew Fearn plays backing tracks from a laptop. And that's it. The music Fearn provides is usually just a bass line matched with a drumbeat; many tracks barely change once they start. This is the musical equivalent of a hard, unfiltered spotlight: look at us and listen.

Sleaford Mods's songs are both local and global. You can't miss Williamson's accent, but he hacks out his words with enough force that they ring clearly, no matter where he's performing. Although Sleaford Mods has been compared to other Northern groups, like the Fall and the Streets, the act that meant the most to Williamson when he was forming the band was New York's Wu-Tang Clan. "A lot of [their songs] were just fucking shouting, I thought, and that's what really got me about it," Williamson said. Sleaford Mods has released four albums, and every track charges along. There is nothing mellow about any of them. Enunciated in an all-caps protest, words like "daft cunt" and "twat" pop up every few minutes. (And it is unlikely that anybody else is singing more about toilets than Williamson is right now.) The world of Sleaford Mods is full of posers, "yesterday's hero," and "livable shit." Williamson is talking about how to live through it all, just, and if he can't, he'll let you know it. Sleaford Mods plays the Wick this Saturday, Nov. 29.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

## ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.*

### Bob Dylan

The most important troubadour of the twentieth century is still making news—and music—well into the twenty-first. There's a new boxed set, "The Basement Tapes Complete," chronicling in minute detail the work Dylan did upstate in 1966 with the Band while he was recovering from a motorcycle accident. Then there's "Lost on the River," for which contemporary artists, including Jim James, Elvis Costello, and Marcus Mumford, have come up with melodies for unrecorded, handwritten lyrics from the same era. Meanwhile, the man himself, at seventy-three, continues to front a powerful rock band. If you haven't yet seen him, don't delay. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-465-6500. Nov. 28-29 and Dec. 1-3.)

### Quintron and Miss Pussycat

Two living legends from New Orleans, whose act is an oddball treasure. For nearly two decades, the German-born Quintron has

been an active purveyor of the noise-addled dance music sometimes referred to as "swamp-tech." The multi-instrumentalist distorts his musical offerings with homemade electronics—he's the inventor of the Drum Buddy, a "light activated analog synthesizer which creates murky, low-fidelity, rhythmic patterns." Miss Pussycat, who sings and plays the maracas, is a puppeteer whose beautiful and colorful googly-eyed creations push their show into the realm of the spectacular. With the noise-obsessed local act **Ice Balloons** and the more rock-oriented **Moondudes**, as well as a set by **DJ Alix Brown**. (Baby's All Right, 146 Broadway, Brooklyn. 718-599-5800. Nov. 29.)

### Turkuaz

This Brooklyn-based nine-piece delivers horn-filled funk incorporating elements of R. & B., psychedelic pop, gospel, Afro-pop, New Wave, classic rock, and just about any genre that gets people dancing. Formed by the guitarist Dave Brandwein and the bassist Taylor Shell in 2008, the group has polished its stage show through relentless touring. Last April, Turkuaz put out its strongest LP to date, "Future 86." Despite its solid releases, epic

performances, and a widening fan base, the group has yet to crack the world of commercial success, but it looks to be en route, with a run of recent shows at Brooklyn Bowl giving it a hard-earned local boost. (Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn 718-486-5400. Nov. 29.)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

### Jason Moran and the Bandwagon

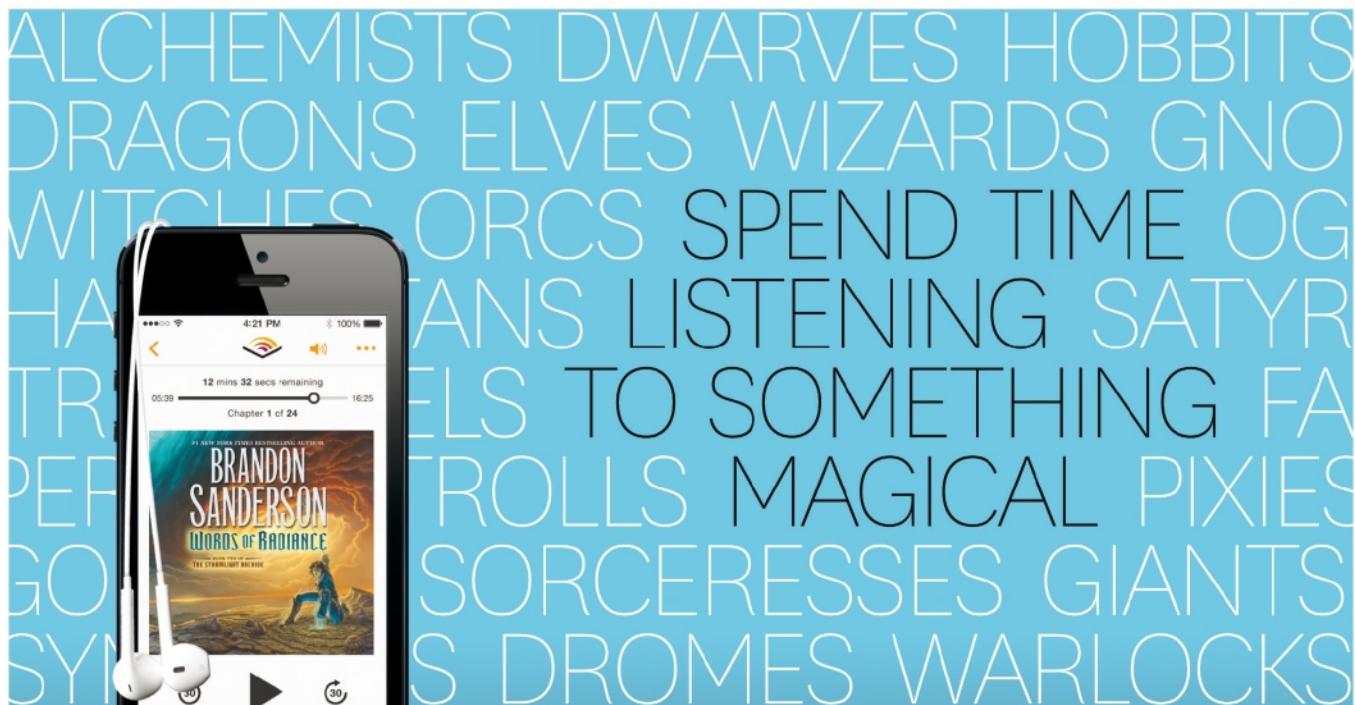
The pianist's latest album, "All Rise: A Joyful Elegy for Fats Waller," radically reworks classics associated with the iconic swing-era instrumentalist, songwriter, vocalist, and entertainer. Enlisting Meshell Ndegeocello as a guest singer, Moran devised a funky mashup of old and new that may ultimately miss the mark as a fully satisfying statement but has a good time attempting to make its point nonetheless. Ndegeocello isn't expected at this engagement, but Moran's volatile Bandwagon trio, with the bassist **Tarus Mateen** and the drummer **Nasheet Waits**, will undoubtedly raise a ruckus all by itself. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Nov. 25-30.)

## The Rhythm Future Quartet

Putting a contemporary twist on the Gypsy jazz idiom while adhering to the familiar drummerless, multiple-guitar configuration of traditional ensembles, this energetic quartet features two attention-grabbing virtuosos, the violinist and Berklee School of Music instructor **Jason Anick** and the Finnish guitarist **Olli Soikkeli**. They're at the Cornelia Street Café on Nov. 28, celebrating the release of their self-titled début album, which includes the group's take on standards, bebop, and Django-esque jazz. (29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. Nov. 28.)

### Maria Schneider Orchestra

This ensemble—a stellar contemporary big band—settles in for its annual Thanksgiving-week engagement at the Jazz Standard. The inventive composer and arranger is coming off a recent collaboration with David Bowie, on his new single "Sue (or In a Season of Crime)," and is polishing up a new recording of her own, "The Thompson Fields." Her music, richly textured and impressionistically inclined, never leaves stirring swing out of the equation. (116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. Nov. 25-26 and Nov. 28-30.)



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## CLASSICAL MUSIC

### OPERA

#### Metropolitan Opera

With its stuccoed walls, pretty orange grove, and smartly executed bits of stage business, Bartlett Sher's durable staging of Rossini's *"Il Barbiere di Siviglia"* has enhanced brilliant performances and buttressed lacklustre ones. In the current revival, the mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, a beautiful, coquettish Rosina, chooses to abstain from the coloratura fireworks that traditionally accrue to the role; as Count Almaviva, the acclaimed Rossini tenor Lawrence Brownlee has bravura to spare, marrying technical accuracy with lots of heart and capping the evening with a showy eight-minute solo. Christopher Maltman's virile Figaro and Maurizio Muraro's less buffoonish than usual Bartolo drive passages that would otherwise languish under Michele Mariotti's flaccid tempos. (Nov. 26 at 7:30 and Nov. 29 at 8.) • **Also playing:** The latest revival of *"La Bohème"* features the singers Sonya Yoncheva (an impressive débuteante) and Charles Castronovo, as Mimì and Rodolfo, and Myrtò Papatanasiu and David Bizic, taking the roles of Musetta and Marcello; Riccardo Frizza is on the podium. (In the second performance, Susanna Phillips replaces Papatanasiu, and Ramón Vargas replaces Castronovo.) (Nov. 28 at 8:30 and Dec. 1 at 7:30.) • Graham Vick's production of Shostakovich's "tragedy-satire," *"Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk,"* is big on satire and short on tragedy—until the close, when the title character, Katerina (a hearty and convincing Eva-Maria Westbroek), on her way to prison for murder, emerges out of her haze of erotic bafflement by way of a pure, spine-tingling scream. James Conlon, who conducted the staging when it débuted, in 1994, paces the opera masterfully, and the orchestra and chorus tear lustily into the composer's always exciting score. The superb cast also includes Brandon Jovanovich, Raymond Very, Anatoli Kotscherga, and Dmitry Belosselskiy. (Nov. 29 at 1. This is the final performance.) • Getting back into the groove at the Met, James Levine has been revisiting many of his specialties—Mozart, the Second Viennese School, and now Wagner, with a welcome return of the Otto Schenk production of *"Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg,"* a massive and extraordinarily demanding work that, under his baton, can seem to possess the freshness of springtime. James Morris, another Wagnerian with a long and distinguished record at the house, returns to the role of Hans Sachs, leading a cast that also features Annette Dasch, Karen Cargill, Paul Appleby, Johan Botha, and Hans-Peter König. (Dec. 2 at 6.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

### ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

#### New York Philharmonic

Jaap van Zweden, the New York-trained Dutch maestro who leads the Dallas Symphony and the Hong Kong Philharmonic, made a successful débüt with the orchestra in 2012; he has returned for two weeks of concerts. The final round begins with a

bit of native advocacy, with van Zweden conducting the orchestra's first performances of the "Cyrano de Bergerac" Overture, by his countryman Johan Wagenaar (1862-1941). It continues with a star turn from Hilary Hahn (soloing in Korngold's Violin Concerto), and concludes with a Philharmonic perennial, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. (Note: The Saturday-matinée program offers a chamber performance of Dvořák's Serenade in D Minor for Winds instead of the Beethoven.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Nov. 26 at 7:30, Nov. 28 at 8, and Nov. 29 at 2 and 8.)

### Le Concert d'Astrée

Those who enjoyed Natalie Dessay's performances as Cleopatra in Handel's "Giulio Cesare" at the Metropolitan Opera in 2013 can get a second helping this week when the soprano comes to Alice Tully Hall with Emmanuelle Haïm's noted Baroque orchestra to perform a bevy of excerpts from the work, joined by the admired countertenor Christophe Dumaix (in the role of Caesar); the composer's Suite in G Major from "Water Music" will offer a momentary diversion from the opera's avalanche of sex and politics. (212-721-6500. Nov. 30 at 5.)

### RECITALS

#### Bargemusic

Nov. 28 at 8: Even during Thanksgiving week, there's always chamber music perking away at the barge. The weekend begins with the pianists Rafal Lewandowski and Alexander Peskanov performing four-hand music by Mozart (the Fantasia in F Minor, K. 608), Poulenc, Shostakovich, and Dvořák (a selection of the "Slavonic Dances") and premières from Alicia Jónas and Byron Adams. • Nov. 29 at 8 and Nov. 30 at 4: The acclaimed young Amphion String Quartet, currently part of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's CMS Two program, graces the floating chamber-music series with a euphonious program of music by Barber (the Quartet, Op. 11, with the "Adagio for Strings"), Dvořák (the "American" Quartet), and Brahms (the Piano Quintet, with Adam Golka). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. [bargemusic.org](http://bargemusic.org).)

### Roulette: John Zorn's "Cobra"

The avant-jazz composer's "game piece," an unpublished, improvisatory work that has achieved legendary status, was world-premiered at Roulette's old lower-Manhattan location in 1984. Zorn himself will lead this thirtieth-anniversary performance, joined by a crew of Gotham's finest experimental musicians that includes the percussionist Cyro Baptista, the pianist Sylvie Courvoisier, and the trombonist George Lewis. (509 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. [roulette.org](http://roulette.org). Nov. 29 at 8.)

### Alice Sara Ott

The twenty-five-year-old German-Japanese pianist (and Deutsche Grammophon recording artist), known for playing barefoot whenever possible, performs music by Beethoven (the Sonata in D Minor, Op. 31, No. 2) and Liszt at the Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center's launching point for up-and-coming artists. (212-721-6500. Nov. 30 at 11 A.M.)

### Brooklyn Rider and Friends

Carnegie Hall's "Notables" series (for aspiring young Carnegie patrons) presents an exclusive evening with the Brooklyn string-quartet trailblazers, who'll perform a range of selections from their classical and contemporary portfolios; the singer-songwriter Aoife O'Donovan joins the group, along with other, unnamed, special guests. (Zankel Hall. Dec. 1 at 7. To join the "Notables" series, call 212-903-9734.)

# ABOVE & BEYOND

# DANCE

## Thanksgiving Roundup

In 1924, the first Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade was organized by employees of the department store. Initially called the Macy's Christmas Parade, it featured live animals from the Central Park Zoo. Three years later, the pageant's iconic balloons were introduced, and this year the festivities include performances by Idina Menzel, Kiss, and many others. ([macys.com/parade](http://macys.com/parade)) On the Saturday after the holiday, Shorewalkers, a nonprofit group whose motto is "See New York at 3 M.P.H.," presents its annual Walk Off the Turkey trot, a calorie-consuming, twelve-mile amble from the Staten Island Ferry terminal to the George Washington Bridge, starting at 10 A.M. ([shorewalkers.org](http://shorewalkers.org)) Later that day, Arlo Guthrie returns to Carnegie Hall with the Guthrie family for an evening of folk songs, storytelling, and waxing philosophical, the first since the death of Pete Seeger, who first brought Guthrie to this hallowed stage for the annual holiday show more than forty years ago. ([carnegiehall.org](http://carnegiehall.org))

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Each of the seventy-five tomes in **Christie's** "First Editions, Second Thoughts" auction, on Dec. 2, has been extensively annotated by its author. ("An early book" comments Philip Roth on the cover page of "Portnoy's Complaint," "driven by high spirits, happiness, and the liberating spirit of the times.") The proceeds benefit the PEN American Center. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • **Sotheby's** upcoming sale of books and manuscripts (Dec. 2) includes a larger than usual selection of works by Walt Whitman as well as an early draft of a letter from Abraham Lincoln to General Ulysses S. Grant, composed in the waning days of the Civil War. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

## READINGS AND TALKS

### Barnes & Noble

Adam Sachs, the editor-in-chief of *Saveur* magazine, the baker and author Dorie Greenspan, and the chef and television personality Carla Hall gather for a discussion of "Saveur: The New Classics Cookbook," moderated by Helen Rosner, of *Eater*. (2289 Broadway, at 82nd St. 212-362-8835. Dec. 1 at 7.)

### BookCourt

The writer and cultural critic Daphne Merkin discusses her latest collection of essays, "The Fame Lunches: On Wounded Icons, Money, Sex, the Brontës, and the Importance of Handbags," with the journalist Katie Roiphe. (163 Court St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677. Dec. 1 at 7.)

### Poetry Project

The performance artist Penny Arcade talks about memory, censorship, and the underground filmmaker Jack Smith (1932–1989). (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-0910. Dec. 1 at 8.)

### Queens College Evening Readings

Martin Amis reads from his new novel, "The Zone of Interest," and discusses his work with the radio host Leonard Lopate. (LeFrak Concert Hall, the Music Building, Flushing. [qcreadings.org](http://qcreadings.org). Dec. 2 at 7.)

## Complexions Contemporary Ballet

It's been twenty years since Desmond Richardson and Dwight Rhoden formed this company, exploiting Richardson's well-deserved reputation as a virtuoso dancer to promote Rhoden's empty choreography. His pieces are often overdone, superficially sexy, and unmusical; now there are two more Rhoden premières: "Head Space," set to recordings by Terence Blanchard, and "The Groove," set to house music from the nineteen-eighties. Marcelo Gomes, a great American Ballet Theatre dancer as yet undistinguished as a choreographer, offers a work about marriage equality. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 25–30.)

## New York City Ballet / "The Nutcracker"

For many, George Balanchine's "Nutcracker" is still the version of this holiday ballet to see. It is the one that Macaulay Culkin appeared in, at age thirteen, in the performance that is still broadcast on television. On the promenade, boys and girls can have their photo taken with a dancer in full Snowflake regalia. But beyond the Victorian sets, the magical tree, and the crystal-clear

storytelling—and the pleasure of seeing so many children onstage and off—the ballet contains some fantastic dancing, particularly in the second act. Keep an eye out, especially, for the dazzling spinning, leaping choreography for Dewdrop in the "Waltz of the Flowers." And you may well spot the next Wendy Whelan; "Nutcracker" is a proving ground for dancers of promise. (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Nov. 28–30. Through Jan. 3.)

## Doug Varone and Dancers

This season's program includes two premières. "Dome" is a seething ensemble piece, responsive to the sounds—mysteriously spare, then buzzingly raucous—of Christopher Rouse's Trombone Concerto. "The Fabulist" is a mortality-haunted solo for the stocky choreographer. But the main draw is a revival of the 2004 dance "Castles," a big, swirling work that rides and resists the aggressive drama of Prokofiev's Waltz Suite, letting the suggestions of fairy tale swell and recede. It's Varone at his best. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Dec. 2. Through Dec. 7.)

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Archive relating to suffragettes Louise Hall and her partner Ethel Harte, with 76 photographs by Ollie Hall, 1915. Estimate \$7,000 to \$10,000.

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**IAG**



A fibre-and-found-object sculpture from 2004 by Judith Scott. Like all her works, it is untitled.

## WRAP STAR

*Judith Scott: Bound and Unbound,” at the Brooklyn Museum.*

THE BEST SCULPTURES ARE TROJAN HORSES, staging sneak attacks on the status quo, from Marcel Duchamp's readymade snow shovel to Franz West's ingenuities in plaster and papier-mâché. The American sculptor Judith Scott literally concealed things: each of her cocoonlike constructions began with an *objet trouvé*—an umbrella, a skateboard, a tree branch, her own jewelry—around which she wound layers and layers and layers of yarn, twine, and strips of textiles until the item's identity was obscured. She made sculptures with secrets. These magnificent fibre-wrapped works are now at the Brooklyn Museum, in “*Bound and Unbound*,” a show curated by Matthew Higgs and Catherine Morris.

Scott died in 2005, at the age of sixty-one, and didn't start making art until her mid-forties. She was born with Down syndrome, went deaf as a child, and never learned how to speak. Languishing in an institution in her native Ohio for more than three decades with her deafness undiagnosed, Scott was considered so beyond help that she wasn't allowed to use crayons. In 1986, her fraternal twin, Joyce, brought Scott to San Francisco and enrolled her in Creative Growth, a community art center for disabled adults. At first, Scott dabbled in drawings. A smattering are in the show, but they're no match for the radical beauty that followed, when Scott took a textile workshop and had a breakthrough, loosely binding sticks into an uncanny totemic cluster. As her work gained complexity, the Bay Area began to take note; by 2001, Scott had been the subject of major shows in Switzerland, Japan, and New York.

Scott's first sculpture is among sixty pieces now commanding attention in two rooms at the museum, installed in groups on low plinths. Although she worked autonomously, unaware of affinities, Scott's pieces do have kindred spirits, from West's nonideological sculptures to the medicine bundles of the Plains Indians—objects in which mystery becomes its own meaning.

—Andrea K. Scott

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Frick Collection

#### “Masterpieces from the Scottish National Gallery”

Had last September's plebiscite gone the other way, this could have been the coming-out party for the top museum of a newly independent country; as it is, it's a small but rewarding sampler of ten paintings from Edinburgh's impressive collection. The earliest work here is Botticelli's “*Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child*,” made around 1485, in which Mary is seen praying so hard that her son seems to start levitating from a rosebush; there is also a genre scene by the young Velázquez, an El Greco featuring an adorable monkey, and portraits of nobles from both sides of the Tweed. The star loan is by an American: John Singer Sargent's tranquil portrait of Lady Agnew of Lochnaw, the wife of a minor baronet, lounging in oodles of white and lilac silk. She looks imperturbable in her armchair, but money comes and goes. In 1922, widowed and in debt, Lady Agnew tried to sell her picture to the trustees of the Frick, who turned her down. Through Feb. 1.

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

### Ha Chonghyun

One of the principal figures of Tansaekhwa—Korea's postwar movement of monochrome painting, whose most famous practitioner is Lee Ufan—Ha didn't so much paint the meditative works here as drag pigment across canvas with a palette knife. The thickness of the impasto, in drab olive or flannel gray, testifies to the artist's physical labor, and also to his tools: you can see the precise width of his knife in a 1998 silver monochrome whose vertical stripes have uniform ridges. In the most recent painting, from 2009, the light-gray paint has been shoved from the bottom to the middle of the untreated canvas, in defiance of gravity, and has hardened into a minimal waterfall. Through Dec. 20. (Blum & Poe, 19 E. 66th St. 212-249-2249.)

### Mario Schifano

This sexy and important tour d'horizon of one of Rome's big artists of the sixties is a rehang of an earlier presentation in London. From minimal painting, Schifano soon moved into work featuring American consumer brands overlaid with colored plastic; one, featuring the Coca-Cola logo under an orange filter, is called simply “*Propaganda*.” By the end of the decade, he was manipulating TV imagery, of war planes and Nazi rallies, or of treacly soap operas, with psychedelic effects that recall Sigmar Polke. Also like Polke, Schifano recorded his own music, which plays in the gallery

here. Through Jan. 10. (Luxembourg & Dayan, 64 E. 77th St. 212-452-4646.)

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Daniel Gordon

Large, pattern-on-pattern photographs make Matisse look like a minimalist. Each of Gordon's pictures is an elaborate construction involving the classic subjects of still-life (vases, flowers, shells, a skull) lifted from the Internet and refashioned as wonky sculptural objects. Arranged on stepped-up platforms as if in a shop window and backed with a crazy-quilt patchwork of dots, plaids, and squiggles, the entire setup is then photographed and Photoshopped until the distinction between reality and artifice completely dissolves. Gordon also isolates and blows up elements of the backdrops in smaller graphic abstractions, which can't compete with the still-lifes when it comes to delirious visual pleasure. Through Dec. 20. (Wallspace, 619 W. 27th St. 212-594-9478.)

### Ursula von Rydingsvard

At seventy-two, the sculptor is still wielding a chainsaw, and her new carvings, hewed from cedar and then rubbed with graphite, are among her best sculptures. Freestanding torqued works, like tornadoes or termite mounds, transform pre-cut stacks

of wood back into something biomorphic, while in one wall-mounted sculpture von Rydingsvard gouges the planks with rows of divots, then further breaks the symmetry with a disruptive, whittled X. Commuters familiar with the artist's bronze vortex outside the Barclays Center subway station will likely appreciate another metal work here: "Bent Lace," a nine-foot tower twisting up from the floor, transforming as it rises from hulking vessel into a gauzy web. Through Dec. 13. (Galerie Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

### Lorenzo Vitturi

In his lively New York début, the Italian artist turns the gallery into a fun house, combining photographs inspired by London's Afro-Caribbean Dalston Market with banners, coconuts, wigs, yams, and other items found there. The mashup sidesteps conventional documentation to tap into the vivacious spirit of the market. Most of Vitturi's photographs are of the tipsy constructions he makes in his studio from produce (think Fischli & Weiss with breadfruit and plantains). He obscures head shots of shoppers and sellers with arrangements of brightly colored fruit and chalk dust, converting them into masked celebrants at his own eccentric carnival. Through Dec. 13. (Milo, 245 Tenth Ave., at 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

## "The Last Picture Show"

A sad occasion: one of Chelsea's better small galleries is closing, further confirmation that the boom in contemporary art is not evenly distributed. This farewell show, resigned but not bitter, features some veteran artists, including a television collage by the Argentine Conceptualist Jaime Davidovich and some scribbles by the late Taylor Mead. But mostly it's a valentine to the gallery's thoughtful young artists, among them Nils Karsten, who makes surreal collages in the vein of Hannah Höch, and Nick Hornby (no relation to the author), a British sculptor who makes marble busts through digital means. On the back wall is a white-on-white picture by Daniel Levine, fading at the edges to reveal untreated canvas: the last painting. Through Nov. 29. (Churner and Churner, 205 Tenth Ave., at 22nd St. 212-675-2750.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

### Basim Magdy

It's hard to explain the magnetic effect of this Egyptian artist's new film, because its constituent parts look so silly in isolation. The thirteen-minute loop, backed by a plunking Philip Glass-style score, has only the haziest narrative, in which a man watches friends and strangers leave for the beach. Manipulated images—of rain on a balustrade,

clambering monkeys, and men on barges carrying paintings of the fish from "Finding Nemo"—are paired with multicolored, nonsynchronous subtitles that work in context but sound ponderous on their own: "Who would want to steal death certificates? The ones who refuse to forget." Surprisingly, it adds up to a powerful meditation on the tangle of past and present, and our futile but inevitable struggle to make sense of it all. Through Jan. 10. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. 212-219-0473.)

### Bryan Schutmaat

Working in a documentary style popularized by Alec Soth, this Texas-based photographer uses portraits and landscapes to sketch a loose but engaging narrative about mines and miners in the American West. An abandoned homestead and the wrecked car collapsed in its driveway are seen against the vista of a pine-dotted mountain so ideal it looks like a painted set. Schutmaat's sites, once magnets for pioneers, are now the end of the road, and the men he photographs are stuck there. Somber, stoic, and weathered, these guys may not be defeated, but they're plainly struggling. Schutmaat regards them with brotherly sympathy, and invites us to share in the sentiment. Through Jan. 11. (Wolf, 70 Orchard St. 212-925-0025.)

# THE THEATRE



## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### A Christmas Memory

Irish Rep presents a musical stage adaptation of the Truman Capote story, set in 1955, with flashbacks to Alabama in 1933, about a young boy being raised by his eccentric relatives. In previews. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-727-2737.)

### The Elephant Man

Bradley Cooper, Patricia Clarkson, and Alessandro Nivola star in a revival of Bernard Pomerance's 1979 play, based on the true story of Joseph Merrick, a severely deformed man who became famous on the British freak-show circuit in the late eighteen-hundreds. Scott Ellis directs. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Honeymoon in Vegas

Tony Danza, Rob McClure, and Brynn O'Malley star in Andrew Bergman and Jason Robert Brown's new musical, based on the 1992

movie. Gary Griffin directs. In previews. (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 866-870-2717.)

### The Illusionists

Seven experts at legerdemain and all sorts of tricks, physical and mental, perform a show on Broadway. The illusionists include the Manipulator (Yu Ho-Jin), the Anti-Conjuror (Dan Sperry), the Trickster (Jeff Hobson), and the Escapologist (Andrew Basso). In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 877-250-2929.)

### The Invisible Hand

Ayad Akhtar ("Disgraced") wrote this play, in which an American banker is kidnapped in Pakistan. Ken Rus Schmoll directs. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-279-4200.)

### Pocatello

David McCallum directs the world première of a new play by Samuel D. Hunter ("The Whale"), about

the manager of an Italian chain restaurant in a changing city in Idaho. Starring T. R. Knight. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

## NOW PLAYING

### Allegro

Stephen Sondheim has said he's spent his life trying to "fix 'Allegro,'" Rodgers and Hammerstein's ambitious 1947 flop. The show (in a rare revival, at Classic Stage) is structurally their most daring, with a Greek chorus and closely interwoven song and text. But the story is perhaps their most conservative: a small-town physician (Claybourne Elder) drifts through life, only to get caught in the corrupting glare of the big city. (The moral: Be a country doctor like your father.) Hammerstein grasps for dark irony but just doesn't have it in him, producing moons and Junes instead. Still, John Doyle's rich staging, in

which the actors accompany themselves on strings and woodwinds, presents the material in its best light (stark) and its best sound: clear and haunting, like a warped Shaker spiritual. (136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111.)

### By the Water

Although almost all the people from a seaside neighborhood on Staten Island are moving away after Hurricane Sandy levelled their homes, Marty and Mary Murphy (Vyto Ruginis and Deirdre O'Connell) have decided to stay and rebuild—a foolish choice from the point of view of their son Sal (Quincy Dunn-Baker), who wants his parents to be safe when the next storm hits. But Sal can't protect his parents from the truth that is uncovered about his father once all the damage from Sandy is assessed. Sharyn Rothstein's drama is sometimes funny and always well acted, under the direction of

**ALSO NOTABLE**  
**ASYMMETRIC**

59E59

**CABARET**  
Studio 54

**THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME**  
Ethel Barrymore

**A DELICATE BALANCE**  
Golden. Reviewed in this issue.

**DISGRACED**  
Lyceum

**FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS (PARTS 1, 2 & 3)**  
Public

**A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER**  
Walter Kerr

**GRAND CONCOURSE**  
Playwrights Horizons.  
Through Nov. 30.

**HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH**  
Belasco

**IF/THEN**  
Richard Rodgers

**IT'S ONLY A PLAY**  
Schoenfeld

**THE LAST SHIP**  
Neil Simon

**LOST LAKE**  
City Center Stage I

**LOVE LETTERS**  
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Connelly

**MATILDA THE MUSICAL**  
Shubert

**ME, MY MOUTH AND I**  
Cherry Lane

**LES MISÉRABLES**  
Imperial

**ON THE TOWN**  
Lyric

**A PARTICLE OF DREAD (OEDIPUS VARIATIONS)**  
Pershing Square Signature Center

**THE REAL THING**  
American Airlines Theatre

**THE RIVER**  
Circle in the Square

**THE SEAGULL**  
Black Box

**SENSE AND SENSIBILITY**  
Black Box

**SIDE SHOW**  
St. James

**STICKS AND BONES**  
Pershing Square Signature Center

**TAIL SPIN!**  
Lynn Redgrave Theatre

**THIS IS OUR YOUTH**  
Cort

**TRISTAN & YSEULT**  
St. Ann's Warehouse

**YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU**  
Longacre

Hal Brooks. But in the end the old-fashioned play, produced by the Manhattan Theatre Club and Ars Nova, doesn't add much to the age-old conversation about how secretive men unintentionally hurt their families. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

**Major Barbara**

Fifty years before Eisenhower warned of the military-industrial complex, George Bernard Shaw was writing about a world in which war feeds prosperity, and those who provide the means for armed conflict constitute the real government. In this play, Shaw couches his political and philosophical concerns in a family setting, pitting the wealthy and powerful arms manufacturer Andrew Undershaft (Dan Daily) against his spiritually committed daughter Barbara (Hannah Cabell), an officer in the Salvation Army. Both are dedicated and highly intelligent, perfect models for expressing the playwright's ever-shifting Möbius strip of perceived morality and the tension between idealism and living in the material world. But, in this Pearl Theatre and Gingold Theatrical Group co-production, as accomplished as the cast is in speaking these witty and thought-provoking lines of 1905, the director, David Staller, doesn't really succeed in overcoming the hoary criticism that Shaw's plays are better read than performed. Too often, two characters engage in a lively exchange of ideas while five others stand stiffly and listen. (555 W. 42nd St. 212-563-9261.)

**The Oldest Boy**

A young mother (Celia Keenan-Bolger) still co-sleeps with her nearly three-year-old son, and breast-feeds him "just a little bit." In other words, she's hardly a candidate for radical nonattachment. Yet, in Sarah Ruhl's moving play, that's just what's asked of her. Her child, Tenzin (played, somewhat ineffectually, by a small Bunraku puppet and the sixty-seven-year-old actor Ernest Abuba), is recognized as the reincarnation of a revered lama, and the mother, a white American married to a Tibetan man, must decide whether to surrender him to the burgundy-robed monks who want to enthrone him. Ruhl's work can sometimes be cloying, perhaps a result of her attempt to soften her fierce, questing intelligence. There's a touch of that here, particularly in a flashback scene, and also a whiff of exoticism. But, under Rebecca Taichman's direction, what emerges is a poignant piece about love and choice. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

**Our Lady of Kibeho**

With her ninth full-length play, the thirty-three-year-old writer Katori

Hall is emerging as a major American voice. Set in Rwanda in 1981, the play covers a year in the lives of several girls at a Catholic school in the beautiful, segregated village of Kibeho. There, the Virgin Mary comes to Alphonsine, Anatolie, and Marie-Claire (played well by Nneka Okafor, Mandi Masden, and Joaquina Kalukango). She wants to love them in a blood-soaked land. Initially incredulous, the girls' various keepers (as Sister Evangelique, Starla Benford is especially fine) start to question their own belief as the Virgin Mary shows signs of her power in the girls' dormitories and by arranging nature a little differently than is usually seen. When Father Flavia (a wonderful T. Ryder Smith) turns up as a kind of exorcist to case the joint, his faith is challenged, too. There are a lot of influences here, from Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" to William Friedkin's "The Exorcist," and, with the support of Michael Greif, the director, Hall has produced a show that balances the poetic with the grotesque as beautifully as she balances the comedic with the sad. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

**Pitbulls**

With a lot of bark and precious little bite, Keith Josef Adkins's chaotic play centers on a quintet of African-American characters in rural Appalachia. With the coal mine shuttered and the penitentiary closed, the town is looking to reinvent itself—with dogfights. As Sheriff Virgil (Billy Eugene Jones) explains, "Just like Cincinnati is known for its beer, we wanna be known for pit bulls." But Mary (Yvette Ganier), who brews moonshine outside her tumbledown trailer, hates dogs. And her cagey son, Dipper (Maurice Williams), may have bludgeoned one and blown up another. Mary's sometime lover, Wayne (Nathan Hinton), a preacher on friendly terms with a variety of sins, and his upright wife, Rhonda (Donna Duplantier), round out the company. Maybe there's a vital, credible play cowering somewhere beneath the overheated language and overwrought situations, but the cast and the director, Leah C. Gardiner can't make it obey. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 866-811-4111.)

**Punk Rock**

Nuclear war frightens Lilly (Colby Minifie), a new student at a posh private school in Stockport, England. She also fears: "Black people. Dogs. Most dogs. Some birds. Farm animals. Sexual assault." Before Simon Stephens's play closes, she'll have new terrors to top the list. Set in a dingy linoleum-lined library, this volatile exploration of adolescence, produced by MCC, converges on seven students in their final year—each a precarious mix of impulse,

hormones, and dread. Under Trip Cullman's direction, the young cast (with an assist from the Off-Broadway icon David Greenspan) give fervent, kinetic performances. Will Pullen is particularly fine as a bully with his own vulnerabilities, and Douglas Smith is quite good as an unpredictable outsider. Sometimes you can feel the playwright nudging the characters toward the alarming climax, but it's still a shock when it arrives. "We all get scared," Lilly insists. Yes, audiences, too. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101.)

**Straight White Men**

Young Jean Lee's play stems from a provocative thought experiment: What if a member of our most privileged demographic shucked society's expectations, moved in with his dad, and did nothing? Would that do any good? Would we applaud him or be repelled by him? Lee, a subversive downtown auteur, is also playing with form: this is her first "straight" living-room drama. The idea is to make strange what we take for granted, in identity and onstage. But the result—in which three adult brothers gather with their father for the holidays, roughhousing and bickering and playing video games—is curiously diffuse, as if Lee (who also directed) distrusted naturalism so deeply she resisted dramatization. We're uncomfortable for all the right reasons, and some of the wrong ones. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

**Tamburlaine, Parts I and II**

The great Shakespearean actor John Douglas Thompson is riveting in this gorgeous Theatre for a New Audience production of Christopher Marlowe's 1587 antiwar drama, about a shepherd so brutal and ambitious that he manages to conquer half the world. But Thompson is almost upstaged by the other main character in this epic: blood. For three hours, stage blood is tossed from buckets, painted across necks, spilled from wineglasses, and even rains down a huge, clear plastic curtain that spans the back of the otherwise empty stage. Mercifully, the director, Michael Boyd—once the artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company—keeps stage fighting to a minimum, and so the many murders that make up the plot are gentler than they could have been (nineteen very gifted actors playing sixty characters fall to the floor after being cursed by Tamburlaine, stage blood pooling underneath their heads or across their chests). Audiences get a visceral sense of tyranny from this inspired production, stunningly punctuated with percussion by the composer Arthur Solari. (Polonsky Shakespeare Center, 262 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111.)



# FOOD & DRINK

## BAR TAB THE GILROY

1561 Second Ave. (212-734-8800)

Having noticed a surfeit of designer strollers and cashmere cable knits in his Upper East Side neighborhood, the Australian transplant Josh Mazza diagnosed a grave deficiency in the area: sexy mixology in a cozy, accessible joint. "Have you seen 'Ocean's Thirteen'? The Gilroy is that pheromonic device Matt Damon uses to seduce his target," Mazza said with a wink. He is a former



sommelier and self-professed "old-timey country boy" whose modernist techniques are anything but. At the Gilroy, you may be sitting beneath Art Deco chandeliers, but, more often than not, you are sipping the future. Juleps are theatrically retrieved from vacuum-sealed pouches of banana-cacao bourbon. The piquant Piña-Margarita, which is topped with salty bubbles that Mazza calls "salt air," smells like the first half of the hybrid and tastes, crisply, like the second. On a recent evening, when two first timers asked for a recommendation among the eight variants of Negroni, Mazza paused. It had taken him hundreds of combinations and "day after day of palate slaughtering" to find those recipes with perfect "dry spiciness." Finally, the Old Oscar (Montenegro, Ancho Reyes, Campari, chocolate bitters) was decided upon. How well had the peppery Reyes teased the back of the tongue? Was its marriage to aromatic Aztec chocolate a successful one? Ice clinked. Verdict reached. It was a very worthy Gilroy indeed.

—Jiayang Fan

## TABLES FOR TWO

# SHUN LEE WEST

43 W. 65th St. (212-595-8895)

**IF MOVIES, AS MARTIN SCORSESE** once put it, "fulfill a spiritual need that people have to share a common memory," so, too, do restaurants, especially when they manage to stick around for decades without changing much. Shun Lee West—the beloved Lincoln Center standby owned by Michael Tong, an early purveyor of "haute Chinese food"—underwent a renovation recently, shifting its color scheme from black, gold, and white to black, gold, and red, with new paint, carpeting, and napkins (still tucked into wineglasses, wedding-banquet style). The menu has been updated to include a gluten-free section (Chicken Soong in Lettuce Wrap, Heavenly Fish Filet). Otherwise, it doesn't feel very different from the way it was in the nineteen-eighties, when it opened: charmingly terrifying, fire-eyed alabaster monkeys hanging from the bar and around the host stand; majestic, glowing dragons circling the high-backed booths in the two-tiered dining room; seasoned, unflappable waiters in vests and ties.

If there's never been a better time to eat Chinese food in New York, there's never been a worse time to eat at Shun Lee, where the menu harks back to an era when Chinese restaurants pandered to timid American palates, and the prices are absurdly high. But there's something deeply comforting about starting a meal with Shun Lee's greasy, blistered version of the kind of crispy noodles that come in a wax-paper bag with Chinese takeout, dipped in little bowls of duck sauce and astringently hot mustard. And where else can you see largely bygone "Old Favorites" like egg foo yung and chicken chow mein so proudly displayed?

Dishes with elegantly metaphorical names—Lily in the Wood, Ants Climb on Trees—smack of a more poetic era. On a recent evening, the Lily in the Wood was a grave disappointment, consisting of still-gritty steamed bok-choy hearts overlaid with tough, chewy shiitakes and drizzled with an aggressively bland, clear sauce. But the Ants Climb on Trees was a clever delight, slippery tangles of beef-flecked cellophane noodles resting atop crisp stalks of Chinese broccoli. Serviceable Shanghai Soupy Dumplings were elevated by the convenience of their presentation, each delivered in its own ceramic spoon. With a little nudging, a waiter was convinced to recommend an off-menu dish: glazed, red-cooked pork-belly Tung-Por, named, he said, after a Song-dynasty poet. It was succulent and sweet, unlike a dish of rather difficult to eat short ribs stewed in soy and rock candy, whose description declared, "It is authentic."

As is true of so many of the city's lasting establishments, Shun Lee hasn't stayed open on the basis of its long-surpassed culinary merits. But here your waiter will arrange your dishes on a small folding stand next to your table, then portion them out for each person in your party, with plenty of time to make it to the opera or the ballet. Shun Lee is just like you remember it.

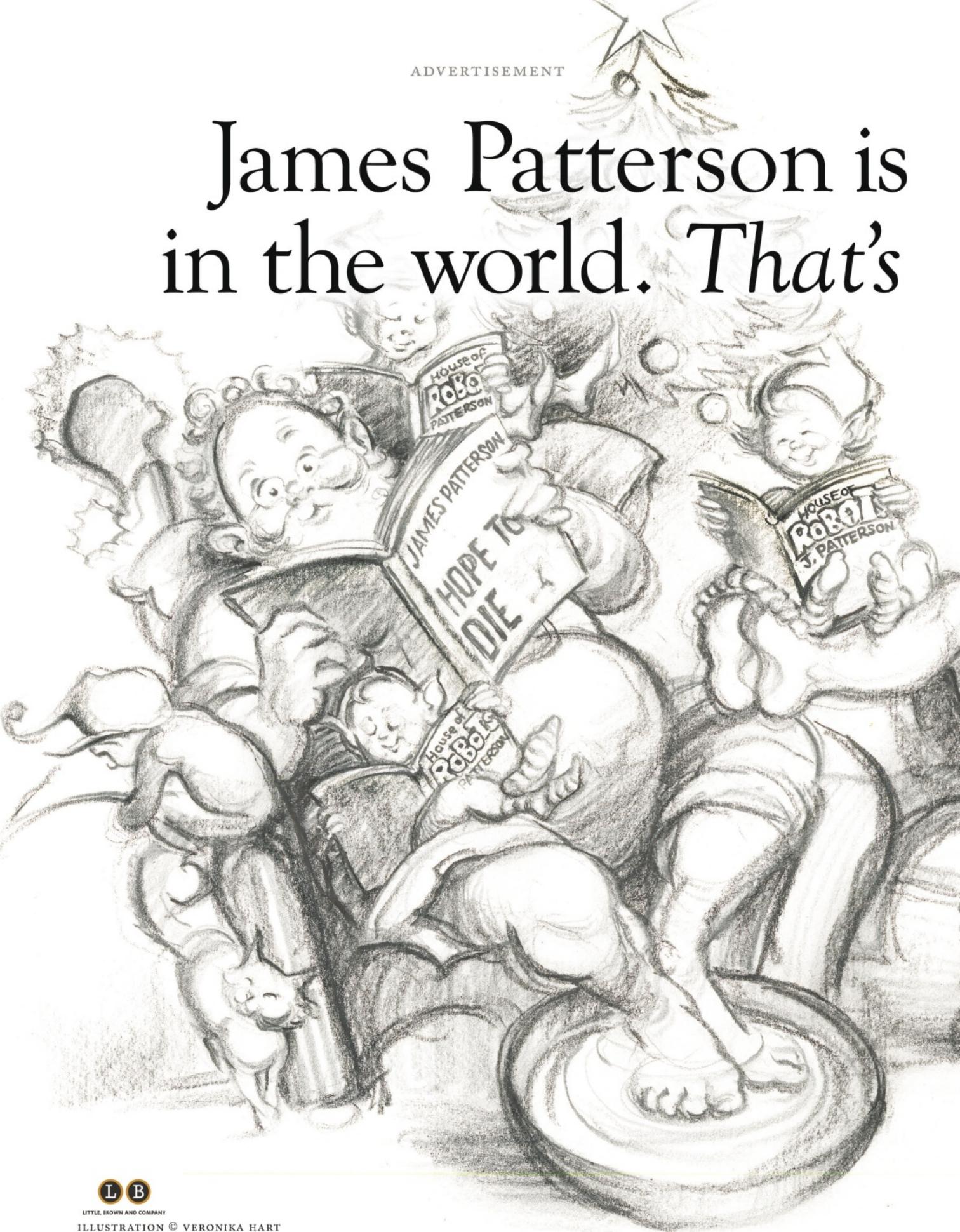
—Hannah Goldfield

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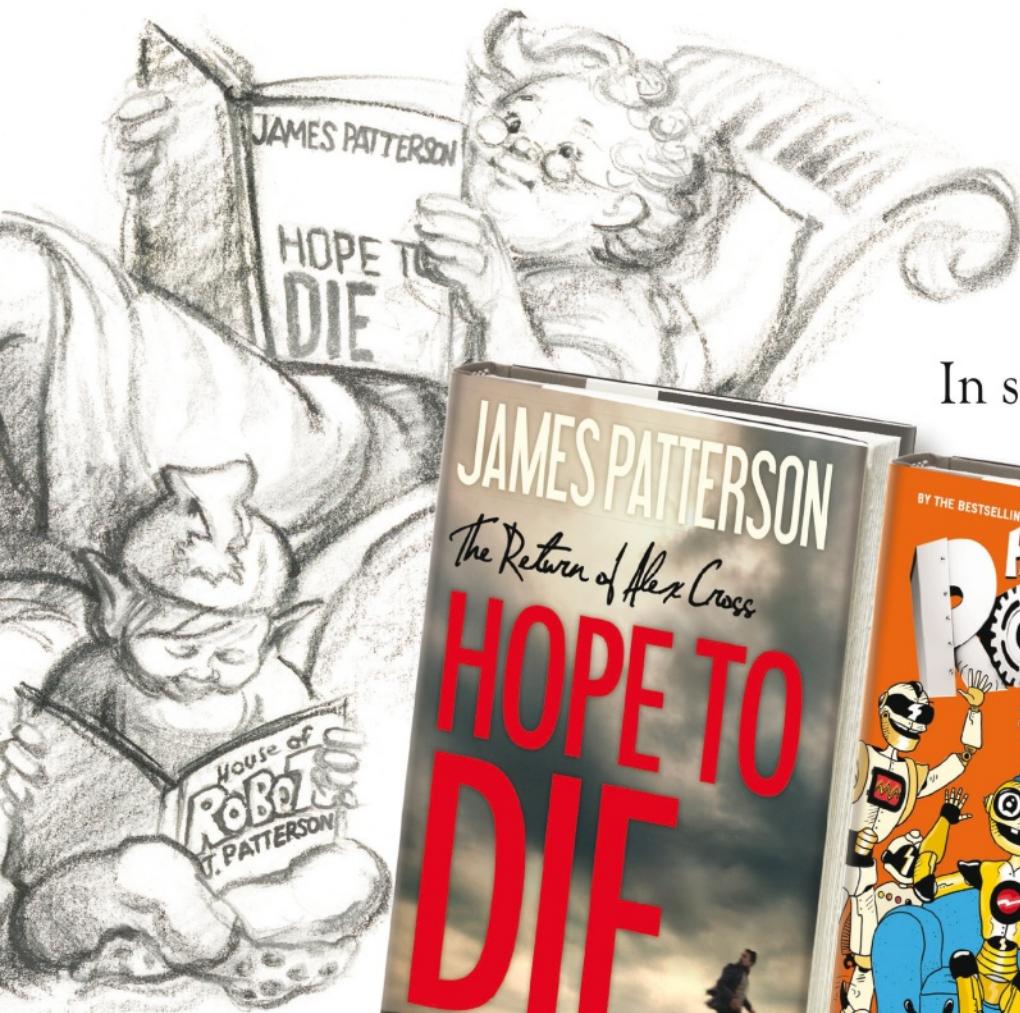


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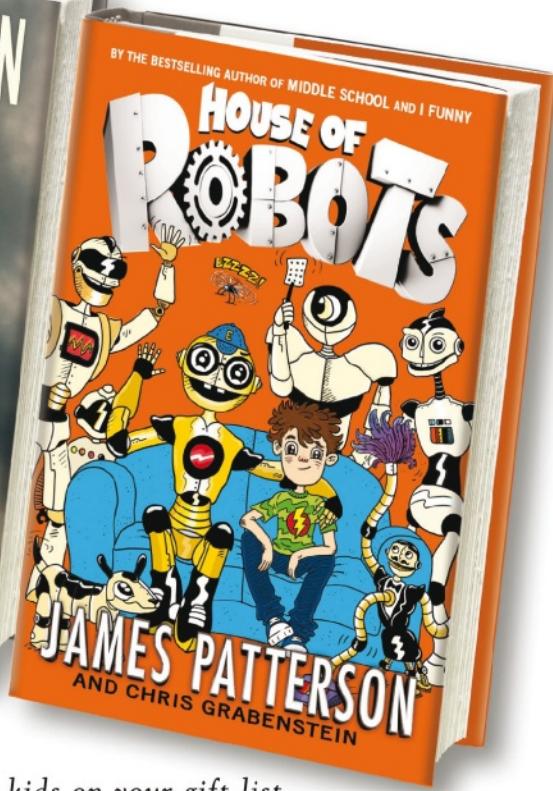
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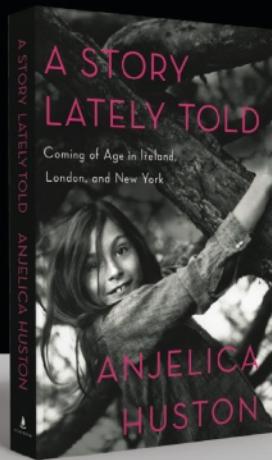
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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT

#### HAVEL IN JERUSALEM

Not long after his unlikely rise from Czech prisoner to Czech President, Václav Havel paid a visit to Moscow. Until that moment, the leaders of Eastern and Central Europe had arrived at the gates of the Kremlin as little more than nerve-racked supplicants. They came to receive instructions and to pay obeisance to the General Secretary. Now Havel was there to see Mikhail Gorbachev, but, with an air of modest self-confidence, he carried a set of demands and an ironic prop. As Michael Žantovský tells the story in his excellent new biography, Havel asked that the Soviet Union remove its troops from Czech territory, and that the two nations sign a statement declaring them equals. Gorbachev, who had already relinquished his imperial holdings, agreed, at which point Havel produced a peace pipe, telling Gorbachev that it had been given to him by the chief of a Native American tribe during a recent trip to the United States. "Mr. President," Havel said, "it occurred to me right there and then that I should bring this pipe to Moscow and that the two of us should smoke it together." Žantovský, who was Havel's press aide at the time, recalls that Gorbachev "looked at the pipe as if it were a hand grenade." Then the Soviet leader turned to Havel and stammered, "But I . . . don't smoke."

Last week, a bust of Havel, who died in 2011, was unveiled at a ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda, in Washington, exactly twenty-five years after Czechoslovakia, in concert with the rest of the Eastern and Central European countries under Moscow's rule, became free. For decades, this had been beyond imagining. The rupture, seemingly so sudden, had many underlying reasons, not least Gorbachev's realization that the imperial system was bankrupt, immoral, and without a future. But it was led and shaped by a singular politician—a playwright of the absurd who well understood the comic improbabilities of his life. Havel

was a child of the Czech bourgeoisie, a lab assistant, a soldier, a stagehand, a dramatist, a moral philosopher, a dissident, a political prisoner for four years, and, finally, a President for fourteen.

Part of the reason that Havel is so celebrated today is that he radiated a homey brand of intellectual glamour—his passion for the Velvet Underground and for the Plastic People of the Universe, his decision to ride around the Castle on a scooter, his late, smoky nights in pubs and theatre basements. Although he trafficked in footlights and stage makeup, there was nothing false about him. His honesty was so extreme, so theatrically self-exposing, that his aides came to dread it. In April of 1990, less than a year after he became President, Havel visited Jerusalem and spoke at the Hebrew University, where he confessed a "long and intimate affinity" with his countryman Franz Kafka, and the near-certainty that his ascent to the Castle had been illusory and undeserved, and was sure to end in his being found out by the authorities:

I am the kind of person who would not be in the least surprised if, in the very middle of my Presidency, I were to be summoned and led off to stand trial before some shadowy tribunal, or taken straight to a quarry. . . . Nor would I be surprised if I were to suddenly hear the reveille and wake up in my prison cell, and then, with great bemusement, proceed to tell my fellow prisoners everything that had happened to me in the past six months. . . . The lower I am, the more proper my place seems; and the higher I am, the stronger my suspicion that there has been some mistake.



Like all politicians, Havel made errors of judgment; what was unusual about him was that he openly acknowledged it. He was also assisted, as he knew, by certain advantages. He was working with a relatively prosperous nation and could look for political inspiration to figures from the pre-Communist past, particularly the great democrat

Tomáš Masaryk, who was President in the nineteen-twenties and thirties. Nevertheless, Havel must be credited with guiding his country, which had been ruled for so long by Berlin and Moscow, to independence, democracy, and the rule of law. He preferred to seize opportunities rather than to nurse grievances. When Gorbachev asked that there be no retribution against Czech Communists, Havel readily agreed.

Such moral imagination is, globally, in short supply. The day before Havel was honored in Washington, another chapter of cruelty unfolded not far from where he delivered his speech at the Hebrew University. In the Har Nof neighborhood of West Jerusalem, two Palestinians, cousins from East Jerusalem, burst into Kehilat Bnei Torah, a synagogue filled with people at their morning prayers. Yelling “*Allahu Akhbar!*”—God is great!—the men attacked the worshippers, with cleavers and guns. They seriously injured eight and killed five, including a rabbi named Moshe Twersky, who was a grandson of the late Joseph Soloveitchik, the leader of Modern Orthodoxy; and a young Israeli policeman, a Druze named Zidan Saif. Then came the moral leadership: Mushir al-Masri, a spokesman for Hamas, wrote on his Facebook page, “The new operation is heroic and a natural reaction to Zionist criminality against our people and our holy places. We have the full right to

revenge for the blood of our martyrs in all possible means.”

There are many ways to think about such a horror, but one might start with the fact that this was a deliberate massacre of human beings at a moment of devotion—no less an act of bloody-minded fanaticism than the one carried out twenty years ago by an Israeli physician named Baruch Goldstein, when he entered the mosque in the Cave of the Patriarchs, in Hebron, and opened fire with a machine gun, killing twenty-nine Muslims at prayer. The Hamas spokesman’s attempt to provide a triumphal “context” is as indecent as the veneration of Goldstein as a martyr by some Israeli fundamentalists.

It is hard to ward off despair when looking at the cast of political players in this drama: the cynical, the racist, the exhausted. For Havel, though, despair was indeed an unforgivable sin. In his first New Year’s address to the Czech people, Havel admitted that the years of oppression had led them to live in a “contaminated moral environment.” Occupation, resentment, terror, and religious hatred have done the same in a place where despair is a constant shadow. Moral leadership, a moral generosity in politics, will not resolve every question—to suppose that it will is a form of sentimentality—but it is an essential part of what is required in Jerusalem and beyond.

—David Remnick

## INK GRAPPLING



Down on the mat, Atticus Lish writhed out of a choke hold. The bigger man, René Dreifuss, spun and grappled, maneuvering toward a guillotine grip—a clench of Lish’s neck, with the crook of his arm squeezing the carotid arteries to cut off the flow of blood to Lish’s brain. The force of the struggle ran them into a padded wall. They paused for a second, each making sure the other was O.K. Brazilian jujitsu, sparring time in the rat cave—Dreifuss’s name for the basement of his mixed-martial-arts studio, on West Twenty-ninth Street, in Manhattan. Dreifuss the teacher and Lish the pupil: Lish, after a minute or two of wrestling, tapped the mat in surrender. It was Lish’s first time there, but they recognized each other from apprenticing together in California, a dozen years ago. Lish liked Dreifuss’s cerebral approach. “Let go of the power and play smart,” Dreifuss said. Lish was used to the

fighting gyms in Brooklyn and Queens where guys just beat the crap out of each other.

Lish had recently published a novel, with a small press called Tyrant Books, which earlier published a book by him of bawdy cartoons. He’d never really written anything before. The novel, called “Preparation for the Next Life,” is about a messed-up Iraq War veteran and a Uighur immigrant trying to make a go of it in Queens. It caught the attention of Dwight Garner, who raved about it in the *Times*, finding in its grim portrait of veteran and immigrant life (flop-houses, strip-mall kitchens, jails) “the finest and most unsentimental love story of the new decade.” Lish doesn’t read reviews.

At forty-three, Lish looks like a guy who might write a book like that: muscular, with bright-blue eyes, a shaved head, and a cauliflowered right ear. But at ten years old he was a clever boy with a bowl cut at a Manhattan private school who told his friends he was reading the dictionary. His father is the editor and writing teacher Gordon Lish—Captain Fiction. Precocity: Don DeLillo, a close friend of Gordon’s, used a passage from one of Atticus’s fourth-grade compositions to end his novel “The Names.”

Then, one Saturday afternoon, still age ten, while home alone and not really actually reading the dictionary, Lish came across “Fists of Fury Theater,” a kung-fu-movie show on WPIX Channel 11. An obsession with two things took root: China and fighting. “I wanted to be Bruce Lee,” he said last week. He studied Chinese in prep school, then mathematics at Harvard, but he dropped out in his junior year. He was getting into fights and into trouble with the police, and working out some issues with privilege and promise. “I was an



Atticus Lish

angry little jerk who needed to have his ass handed to him,” he said. “I am ashamed of how I behaved.”

He got a basement apartment in East Flushing, Queens, and a series of fast-food jobs. He’d stopped talking to his father. After a year, he joined the Marines. “I loved Parris Island,” he said. He received an honorable discharge after a year and a half—“For family reasons. I won’t expand on that”—and moved back to Boston with his wife, Beth, a Korean-born schoolteacher he’d met in Harvard Square when she was a teen-ager. He worked as a security guard at the Necco-wafer factory. He began to study Thai boxing, in the hope of becoming a professional mixed-martial-arts fighter. His teacher told him that he needed to learn the grappling game and introduced him to the Machado brothers, a family of Brazilian jujitsu masters, in Torrance, California. He moved there and spent six years studying on and off with them, while working in a Styrofoam factory. Toward the end of his time with the Machados, he fought two professional M.M.A. bouts. The first, in Phoenix, was a win. “Rear naked choke,” Lish said. The second, at the Superbrawl, in Hawaii, was a loss by decision.

He concluded that it was time to move on, so he went back to Harvard to complete his degree, with a thesis on Ascoli’s theorem. But he was actually not very good at or interested in math, and learned more, he said, in a job with a moving crew, where his foreman, seeing him stack boxes sloppily, told him, “Try to be smarter than the box.” He then went to China for a year to teach English. He’d started reading again. “I became intellectually curious,” he said. He and Beth returned to New York, to Sunset Park, and Lish began working as a technical translator, Chinese into English. He reconciled with his father. And then he began writing, in long-hand. He told no one about it. He drew on his own experiences—travels in Xinjiang, some nights in jail, and counter-work at Papaya King and the Kowloon Cafe—but also on reporting, in Chinatown fast-food kitchens and pharmacies, sweatshops, shuttle buses, V.A. hospitals, massage parlors, mosques. The book took him five years.

Back at the rat cave, the novelist was

on the floor, an elbow in his face, tangling with a muscular blue belt whom Dreifuss had dubbed Superman. Dreifuss likes to give students nicknames. At first, he called Lish “Atticus Finch,” but then he said, “With a name like Atticus, you don’t need a nickname.” Superman had him in a rear naked choke. Lish tapped out.

—Nick Paumgarten

## FIELD TRIP THE CLIMB



On a recent Sunday morning, Elisha Almonte, a sixteen-year-old honors student at the High School for Teaching and the Professions, in the Bronx, waited with her father, Beethoven Almonte, at his apartment, for a car to pick her up and take her to Manhattan. Elisha, who is pretty and slight, wore a skirt, a gray sweater, and polka-dot tights. “Tomorrow, I’ll be more glammed up,” she said. She was about to take an Amtrak train with Ruth Lande Shuman, the president of Publicolor, an art-based education organization, to Washington, D.C., to accept a National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from Michelle Obama, at the White House. Beethoven Almonte said that he had never been to the White House but that he had gone to Bill Clinton’s Inauguration with his junior-high-school marching band.

Almonte first encountered Publicolor, which teaches students how to beautify their schools with paint, at the Bronx Writing Academy, her middle school. “They came to my school and showed before and after pictures,” she said. “I was, like, ‘I want to paint!’” She and her fellow-students painted the school’s common spaces Sundance, Oriole, and Apple Green. “We’re like semi-professional painters,” she said. The students get painting lessons (color theory, taping, rolling), and non-painting lessons (showing up on time, having a good attitude, S.A.T. prep). Later, they paint elsewhere: playgrounds, shelters, police stations.

Almonte paints every Saturday; she also writes and sings. At the Bronx Writing Academy, she said, “it wasn’t just a

name—we wrote all the time. I like free-writing, whatever comes to mind. Song lyrics. I’m always writing music.” She laughed. “I’ve sung in talent shows. Never one of my songs, because I’m too nervous for everybody to hear that. At my eighth-grade graduation, I sang ‘The Climb.’” That’s a Miley Cyrus song, from the Hannah Montana era.

“Basically, the song’s saying it’s not about how we get there—it’s about the climb,” she said. Almonte’s father did not go to college; her mother went for two years. “Then I came along,” Almonte said.

With her Publicolor mentors, Almonte has visited Rutgers, Georgetown, and other universities. “I want to be a lawyer,” she said. “I want people to be treated fairly. I always love defending people, and in arguments and stuff I’m going to win.”

In midtown, Ruth Lande Shuman hugged Almonte and Irma Nepomuceno, a young Publicolor employee, who was travelling with them. “I feel like the mother chicken!” said Shuman, who is seventy. She is an industrial designer, and she founded Publicolor eighteen years ago. She wheeled a bright-orange suitcase and wore sunglasses, a dark coat, and a resin bangle bracelet the size of a Bundt cake.

In D.C., the threesome took a brisk walk through the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden. They admired Oldenburg and van Bruggen’s “Type-writer Eraser, Scale X,” a Lichtenstein, and a Calder. At the sight of a pyramid of white cubes, Shuman cried out with glee. “This, my darlings, is by Sol LeWitt, whose design we’re going to paint!” she said. (An upcoming project at a Manhattan high school.) They posed for a picture in front of it.

The next morning, the three assembled in their hotel lobby with the other award recipients. Shuman checked her e-mail. “One of my childhood friends says, ‘Celebrate with wild abandon!’” she said. Almonte, glammed up, wore flats and a cobalt-blue dress. She and Nepomuceno practiced shaking hands.

“It’s such an honor to meet you,” Almonte said.

At the White House, inside the East Wing, members of the President’s Marine Band, in scarlet jackets, played low-key jazz beneath a portrait of Bill



*"Thomas! Did Judas put you up to that?"*

• • •

Clinton. In the grand East Room—gold curtains, crystal chandeliers—the awardees took their seats, in front of enormous oil paintings of George and Martha Washington.

Ceremonial music played, and Michelle Obama arrived: colorful dress, bare arms, a spirit of maternal warmth. "Well, *welcome* to the White House!" she said. She praised the after-school groups for teaching kids how to play the blues, produce Shakespeare, and make go-karts, and "what it's like to have a j-o-b." Pairs of students and mentors marched up to her, smiling, to get their awards. Handshake practice hadn't been necessary: Obama hugged them all. When Almonte took the stage, with Shuman, she beamed at the First Lady. Obama enclosed her in her arms, and they whispered to each other while posing for photographs.

As the ceremony concluded, a band from Mississippi—possibly the youngest blues musicians on earth—played "Sweet Home Chicago." "One and one is two! Two and two is four!" an eight-year-old sang. They got a standing ovation. George Washington, above the crowd, extended a benevolent arm. The First Lady high-fived the band and told everybody to have fun at the reception, in the next room. "Enjoy yourselves! Don't tear anything up," she said.

What had Almonte whispered with

the First Lady? "I told her I'd never forget this," Almonte said. "She said that she'd never forget it, either. And she told me to go to college."

—Sarah Larson

#### YOUR OWN SIZE DEPT. BODYGUARD



**Y**ao Ming the giraffe led a short, difficult life. He was born last year, at the Houston Zoo, and stood six feet two inches tall—average for a newborn giraffe, but hardly tall enough to reach the shoulders of his namesake, the sky-scraping Chinese former basketball star. Soon, Yao Ming the giraffe got sick. He developed an infection in his shoulder, followed by arthritis and cartilage damage in his hip. After just seven weeks, doctors decided that there was nothing left to do but put Yao Ming the giraffe to sleep.

Yao Ming the human could empathize: he was bred for basketball—his parents, both over six feet, had been "encouraged" to partner up, as rumor has it—but injuries cut short his All-Star career, and, even before Yao Ming the giraffe's death, Yao Ming the human had decided

to dedicate his post-basketball life to protecting animals "bigger than me," which is to say, not many. In 2006, inspired by several P.S.A.s in which Jackie Chan advocated on behalf of tigers, Yao led a campaign to protect sharks, whose appendages are sliced off to make shark-fin soup. Consumption dropped by more than half, and Yao turned his attention to the ivory and rhino-horn trades, filming a video for WildAid, the conservation group, in which he politely applauded as Prince William recited the campaign's slogan ("When the buying stops, the killing can, too") in muddled Mandarin.

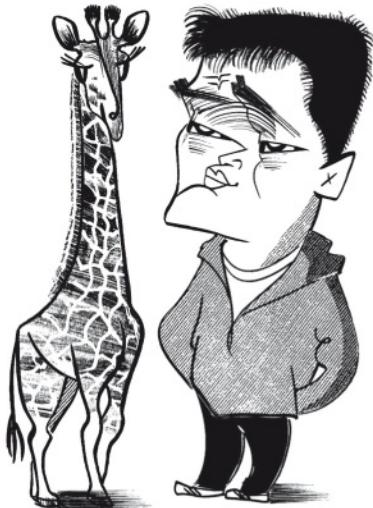
Last week, Yao, who is seven and a half feet tall and noticeably heavier than his playing weight of three hundred and ten pounds, walked into the Central Park Zoo wearing a Reebok fleece, white Nike sneakers, and enough facial hair to suggest that he had left his razor in Shanghai, where he lives. He was in town for the première of his new Animal Planet documentary, "Saving Africa's Giants with Yao Ming." (Sample voice-over: "One man is willing to stand as a Great Wall and defend elephants and rhino.") Yao made two trips to Africa, which had logistical difficulties. He couldn't find hiking boots in a size 18, and his head scraped the ceiling of a prop plane that was carrying him to a Kenyan elephant reserve—the sort of indignity that happens a lot. In midtown, on the way to the zoo, he had squeezed half his body into the front seat of a Lincoln Navigator, but couldn't maneuver his head past a handlebar on the doorframe. "That's gonna be a problem," he said, before walking to one of the back doors.

Yao had never been to Central Park—"Garden is not far from here?" he said, upon learning that he had played the Knicks nearby—let alone the zoo, so he took a zookeeper's recommendation and started in the Tropic Zone. "Can I touch it?" he asked, spying a large blue bird within his reach but no one else's.

Yao was sweating in the Tropic Zone, so he made his way out to the snow monkeys. "Why are their faces red?" he asked a volunteer. "That's just the way they come," she said. "Their butts are red, too. And, when they're actually in mating season, they turn even brighter red." Yao's face got a little red. The volunteer recommended the zoo's snow leopards, which are native to the Chinese Himalayas. No

luck: Askai and Zoe were napping. On to the red-panda pen, where Yao took a photo of two bears sitting in a tree. He had always wanted a pet, but never owned one. "My mom and my wife are scared of dogs and cats," he said, with a shrug. "Woman rules the house."

After the tour, Yao took a break on a bench, but only after asking someone to sit on the other end as a counter-weight. ("I don't want it to go flying!") As a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, he was pleased to learn that just that morning Presidents Obama and Xi had announced a landmark climate-change accord. "Our two countries should set a model for the world," he said, mentioning carbon emissions and ivory sales, both categories in which China and the U.S. rank worst and second-worst. Beyond activism, Yao was busy finishing an undergraduate degree in economics, and buying businesses: a basketball team (the Shanghai Sharks), a private-equity firm (Chongqing Yufu Assets Management

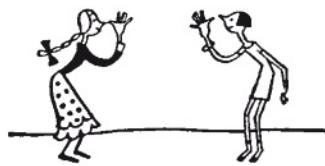


*Yao Ming*

Group), and a winery in Napa. Yao Family Wines were served at the documentary's première. The wines are available in China, though not, apparently, in the Great Hall of the People, where Obama and Xi had been photographed toasting their achievement with something other than the 2010 Yao Ming Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. "Let's work on that!" Yao said, before walking across Fifth Avenue to the waiting Navigator. He had learned his lesson, and climbed straight into the back seat.

—Reeves Wiedeman

## NICE TO MEET YOU DEPT. MOM FRIENDS



Two mothers from Montclair, New Jersey, piled into a black Volvo on a recent rainy evening and drove forty-five minutes to a lonely street in Gowanus. "It's a good night for being inside making friends, right?" Hillary Frank (mother of Sasha, four and a half) said to her friend, Natalie Chitwood (Freddy, five; Wynn, two), as they unloaded goody bags containing sweet-potato-and-pumpkin baby food.

Frank, the host of the WNYC parenting podcast "The Longest Shortest Time," was worried that the weather might keep women from leaving their plastic-toy-strewn homes for the Bell House, a club where she was holding her first live event, "Speed Dating for Mom Friends." The twenty-five-dollar admission included a cocktail, snacks, and plenty of promising new adult playdates. Sixty moms had signed up. "We have someone driving in from Pittsburgh!" Frank said, picking raisins out of her purse.

Billed as a "3 A.M. bedside companion for parents," Frank's biweekly podcast covers such themes as "What Does Your Breast Pump Say to You?" and "A Parents' Guide to Eating Over the Sink." "Over and over, I hear, 'It's hard to make mom friends,'" she said. "It's such a vulnerable time. You're suddenly in charge of this person, and you don't want to screw it up. You need support." She and Chitwood met four years ago, at mommy-and-me yoga. "It was love at first sight," Frank said. Tonight, she was hoping to help her fellow-moms find the same thing.

At seven o'clock, the doors opened. Aretha Franklin's "Baby I Love You" blasted, and new mothers from such places as East Harlem and Williamsburg wandered in and scribbled nametags. "I'd like to meet someone from the senior set," Allison B. (Oliver, thirteen months), a personal stylist, said. "I'm forty-three, and there aren't a lot of us."

Standing solo by the bar was Jennifer M. (Henry, six months), a stay-at-home mom from Prospect-Lefferts Gardens.

"If I see someone breast-feeding at the park, I think, 'Oh, good, she's not a nanny,'" she said. "Sometimes I meet someone who seems O.K., but then she starts badmouthing vaccines and I'm, like, Red flag!"

"How many times a day do you want to throw your kid out the window?" Kathryn M. (Julian, three years) asked a young woman who was sipping water. The woman looked petrified. "I'm only ten weeks pregnant," she replied. She looked around. "Am I the only one?"

Soon, everyone had settled around card tables. Beth Pappas, a professional speed-dating host, who had on black stilettos and a spaghetti-strap top, took the stage. "Ladies, listen carefully," she said. "Interior row stays seated, exterior row rotates." She banged a butter knife against a gong. "Go!"

The room erupted with the sound of women talking.

"I have four children, and I don't work," Chana M., an Orthodox Jew with red lipstick, told her tablemate. "Wow, you must be busy," Allison B., the personal stylist, politely responded. Chana M. continued, "Most women in my community have three to six kids and work. I feel like an underachiever." Probably not a match.

*Gong!*

Susan F. (unnamed kids, ten and thirteen) slid in across from Lee I. (Mavis, three), who was wearing a floppy red hat. Susan F. confessed that she is the founder of Park Slope Parents, and that if moms needed to speed-date maybe she wasn't doing her job. "So what's your story?" she asked. Lee I., an environmental planner with the mayor's office, brought up her daughter's love of singing. "No, I don't want to know about *that*," Susan F. interrupted. "I want to know about *you*. You're so much more than your daughter."

*Gong!*

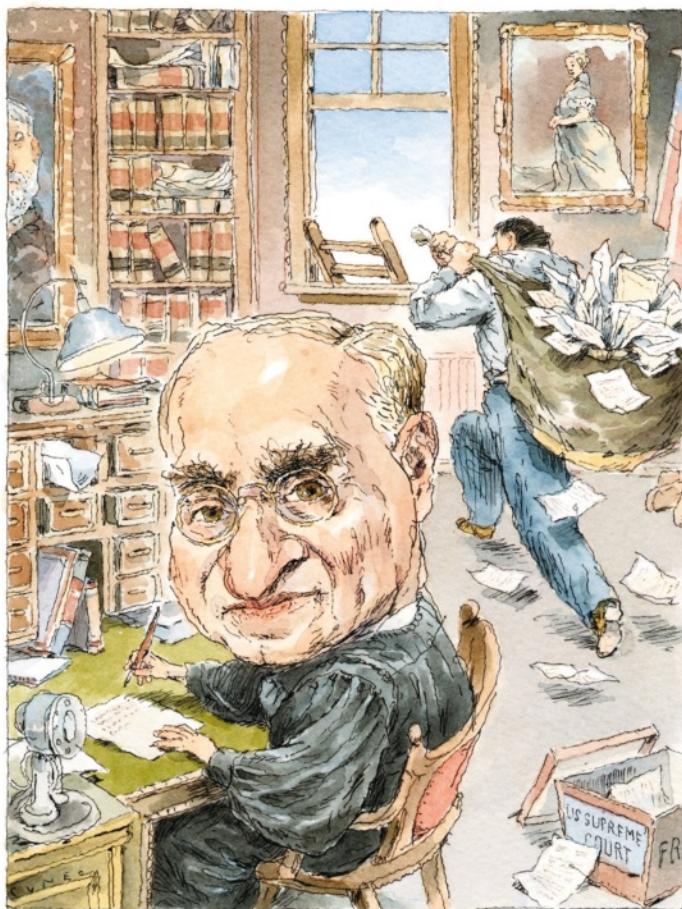
Afterward, the mothers were invited to "grab your new best friend for a picture in the couples photo booth!" Two women who'd bonded over the Cry It Out philosophy jumped in front of the sequinned photo backdrop. Others hit the bar for another round of Long Island Iced Teas. Kristine A. (Eva, two months) was tired. "It was nice to meet you," she said to her tablemate. "I've got to go home and feed my baby."

—*Rachel Levin*

# THE GREAT PAPER CAPER

*Someone swiped Justice Frankfurter's papers. What else has gone missing?*

BY JILL LEPORE



The biggest heist in the history of the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, was so sneaky that for a long time no one noticed that someone had smuggled out of the Reading Room more than a thousand pages from the papers of the U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, including Frankfurter's correspondence with Lyndon B. Johnson, Charles Evans Hughes, George Bundy, and Hugo Black, and seven years' worth of Frankfurter's diaries. In November, 1972, after the theft was discovered, the Library of Congress called the F.B.I. The F.B.I. launched an investigation; it lasted more than a year. A grand jury was convened. Then, sud-

denly, the investigation was abandoned. The thief was never caught. The case is as cold as stone.

Felix Frankfurter is one of the most cantankerous and controversial figures in the history of American law. By some accounts, he broke the Court, and it has never been right since. The pilfering of his papers was a disaster, but it's nothing compared with the loss to the historical record that happens every day, a block away, in the chambers of the U.S. Supreme Court. The papers of Supreme Court Justices are not public records; they're private property. The decision whether to make these documents available is entirely at the discretion of the

*The Supreme Court has no policies for preserving the papers of its Justices.*

Justices and their heirs and executors. They can shred them; they can burn them; they can use them as placemats. Texts vanish; e-mails are deleted. The Court has no policies or guidelines for secretaries and clerks about what to keep and what to throw away. Some Justices have destroyed virtually their entire documentary trail; others have made a point of tossing their conference notes. "Operation Frustrate the Historians," Hugo Black's children called it, as the sky filled with ashes the day they made their bonfire.

This fall, the Supreme Court issued a number of rulings that came as something of a surprise—refusing to hear a series of cases involving same-sex marriage, for instance—but there's no reason to believe that historians will ever really know how the Court arrived at these decisions. Very few of the documents that could genuinely illuminate them will survive. The Federal Records Act, passed in 1950, specifically excludes the Supreme Court. In 1978, in the wake of Watergate, Congress passed the Presidential Records Act, which made the papers of American Presidents the property of the federal government; destroying them is a federal crime. There is no judicial equivalent. The Supreme Court's official papers—formal filings, such as petitions, opinions, and briefs; and official records, such as audio recordings, transcripts, and governmental, case-related correspondence—end up at the National Archives. The papers of the Justices, if they save them, tend to go to the Library of Congress, to their alma maters, to their home towns, or to some other place they happen to like. They're scattered across the country, and, by the time they arrive, they have, as a rule, been carefully culled.

The secrecy surrounding the U.S. Supreme Court derives from a policy set by the first Chief Justice, John Marshall, who wanted the Court to issue single, unanimous decisions and to conceal all evidence of disagreement. His critics considered this policy to be incompatible with a government accountable to the people. "The very idea of cooking up opinions in conclave begets suspicions," Thomas Jefferson complained. This criticism has never entirely quieted, but every time things get noisy the Court simply brazen it out. To historians and

journalists who are keen to have the Court's papers saved and unsealed, advocates of judicial secrecy insist that the ordinary claims of history and of public interest do not apply to the papers of U.S. Supreme Court Justices; the only claim on the Justices is justice itself.

Sitting Justices often view their colleagues' decisions to make their papers public without delay as a betrayal of the living. Louis Brandeis began handing his papers over to the University of Louisville, in Kentucky, in 1936, three years before he stepped down from the Court. Frankfurter and Brandeis had been close correspondents. After Brandeis's death, in 1941, Frankfurter went to Louisville, stormed into the library, asked for the file labelled "Frankfurter," and took nearly everything out of it. "These are my papers, and I'm taking them back," he told the librarian as he walked out the door, sheaf in hand.

Even judges who start out thinking they'd like to make their papers available tend to change their minds. After William Rehnquist graduated from Stanford Law School, he clerked for Frankfurter's colleague Robert Jackson. Early in his career, Rehnquist told the legal historian Stanley Katz that he thought there ought to be a requirement that all judicial papers be given to the Library of Congress. In 1971, when Rehnquist was nominated to the Court, his nomination was nearly defeated by the discovery, among Jackson's papers, of a memo that Rehnquist had written in 1952, on the subject of segregation. In 1986, the memo haunted Rehnquist's confirmation as Chief Justice, too. Not long afterward, the legal historian Melvin Urofsky, who was researching a book about *Johnson v. Santa Clara*, a 1987 affirmative-action case, happened to be chatting with William Brennan at a party. "Could I look at your folder on this case?" Urofsky asked Brennan, half joking. "Sure," Brennan said. Urofsky went to Brennan's office, and Brennan's secretary gave him a thick folder. (Brennan had written the opinion for a 6-3 majority, upholding a company's decision to hire a woman over a man; Rehnquist joined a dissent written by Antonin Scalia.) After Urofsky's book came out, he went back and asked Brennan for a folder relating to another case. "I'm sorry but I can't," Brennan said. The Chief

Justice had read Urofsky's footnotes, Brennan said. "Rehnquist had a fit."

Cases decided by the Rehnquist Court include *Bush v. Gore*, one of the most momentous actions ever taken by the Court. In the twenty-first century, the Supreme Court wields far more power than it did in the eighteenth. Is judicial secrecy defensible in an era of judicial supremacy? Fair-minded arguments can be made on both sides. But, so far, the question hasn't been debated; it's been tabled. Rehnquist died in 2005. In 2008, his papers—nearly nine hundred boxes—went to the Hoover Institution. More than five hundred will remain closed until the last Justice who served with Rehnquist dies. History is patient. But perhaps the time has come to ask, How long is too long to wait?

**F**D.R. nominated Frankfurter to the "scholar's seat" on the Court in 1939. Rarely has an appointment been met with such high expectations. People thought he'd be the next Oliver Wendell Holmes. "He has more brains than the whole Brain Trust combined," a friend of his said. Rarely has a Justice proved so disappointing.

During the twenty-five years that Frankfurter taught at Harvard Law School, from 1914 to 1939, a conservative Court repeatedly struck down laws aimed at economic reform and regulation, and Frankfurter insisted that, in declaring measures like minimum-wage laws unconstitutional, the Court was overstepping its authority. During the twenty-three years that Frankfurter served on the Court, from 1939 to 1962, its most significant judicial activism concerned overturning laws that restricted civil liberties and civil rights. Frankfurter nearly always dissented from these decisions, citing his commitment to judicial restraint. A brilliant liberal scholar, Frankfurter became known, on the Court, as its most implacable conservative, not because his politics changed but because his view of the role of the Court did not.

Arguments about judicial restraint are not often principled arguments about jurisprudence; instead, they're politics by other means. When the Court is conservative, as it is now, liberal legal scholars tend to urge judicial restraint; when the court is liberal, it's conservatives who

urge restraint. Frankfurter's principled opposition to judicial activism is unusual, and serves as a cautionary tale about the limits of that position.

In 1940, the Court decided a case that arose in Minersville, Pennsylvania, when two elementary-school students, Billy and Lillian Gobitas, both Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to salute the American flag. The American Civil Liberties Union—which Frankfurter had helped found—filed an amicus brief in support of the Gobitas family. Frankfurter wrote an 8-1 opinion upholding the mandatory flag salute, citing the principle of judicial restraint. To his outraged friends, he declined to elaborate. "It is not for a Judge to indulge in private exegesis of his opinions," he insisted. "He must let them speak for themselves." Meanwhile, he filed explanations among his papers, awaiting the redemption of history.

Frankfurter's flag-salute opinion didn't last three years. He earned a reputation as an annoyance. He lectured his fellow Justices, as if they were his law-school students. His diaries are even more arrogant and venomous. He proved incapable of forging agreements. In 1943, in a second Jehovah's Witness flag-salute case, *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, Jackson wrote an opinion for a 6-3 majority that ruled in favor of the Barnette family. Frankfurter wrote a bitter dissent.

Felix Frankfurter may have been the most divisive Justice ever to serve on the Court. The legal scholar Cass Sunstein has recently demonstrated that, in 1941, the Court changed "from a court that had operated by consensus, with very few separate opinions, into something closer to nine separate law offices, with a large number of dissenting opinions and concurrences, and with a significant rate of 5-4 divisions."

The change is sudden, dramatic, and puzzling. It may turn out that a divided Court is the legacy of Felix Frankfurter. But anyone seriously interested in pondering that legacy has got to wonder: Who raided his papers?

**I**n 1949, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., asked Frankfurter for permission to see his correspondence with F.D.R. "You yourself should choose what should be reserved for the ultimate historian," Schlesinger wrote, "but in the meantime

I hope something may be turned over to us proximate fellows!" Frankfurter said no, but the exchange got him thinking. In 1954, he asked one of his clerks, Alexander Bickel, to begin dividing his legal papers, one half to go to the Library of Congress and the other to the Harvard Law School Library. The Library of Congress collection was to be opened immediately after Frankfurter's death, with one restriction: no document could be seen until sixteen years had passed since the date it was written. The Harvard papers (also known as "the Court papers") were to be closed; anyone who wanted to see them had to get permission from Bickel and Paul Freund, Frankfurter's closest colleague at Harvard. Frankfurter named Donald Hiss, Alger Hiss's brother, the executor of his estate, and left his longtime secretary, Elsie Douglas, in charge of making sure that the papers got to the right place. (Before she was Frankfurter's secretary, she had been Robert Jackson's secretary, and also, many believed, his mistress.)

Frankfurter retired from the Court in 1962, after suffering a stroke. He then began eagerly anticipating his own biography, supplying a list of men "whom I deem wholly qualified to write my judicial biography." Any of them was to have complete access to the Harvard papers; everyone else had to go through Freund and Bickel. Frankfurter hoped that the story of his life might be written by Philip Kurland, a former clerk of his who had become a distinguished constitutional scholar at the University of Chicago Law School. Kurland agreed to prepare a book of Frankfurter's "extrajudicial essays." But he couldn't write the Frankfurter biography because he'd already been anointed to write a life of Jackson. Meanwhile, Frankfurter allowed a reporter, Max Freedman, to edit a collection of letters between himself and F.D.R. "Tell the whole story," Frankfurter said to Freedman on his deathbed, in 1965. When Freedman's collection of letters appeared, Kurland asked Bickel to monitor anything that Freedman might try to publish about Frankfurter. But Freedman was in no condition to publish: he suffered a stroke that left him unable to write. He moved to Winnipeg and became a recluse.

In fact, none of the men on Frankfurter's

list of approved scholars wanted, or were able, to write his biography. Bickel and Freund, trying to "protect the turf" while they looked for just the right man for the job, rejected nearly all requests to see the Harvard papers, including requests from the dean of a law school, a Bancroft Prize-winning historian, a popular biographer, and a tenured political scientist. Freund wrote to Bickel, "I'd prefer an ex-law clerk."

Judicial biography lies at the intersection of two dark alleys: a corner where judicial secrecy meets authorized biography. In 1969, when William Rehnquist was Nixon's Assistant Attorney General, he started thinking about writing a biography of Jackson. He asked Bickel "whether trying to get access to family papers would be a hopeless job." But Jackson's papers weren't in family hands; they were in Kurland's office, in Hyde Park. Rehnquist abandoned the biography.

The Library of Congress's Frankfurter collection—more than two hundred and fifty boxes of diaries, letters, and more—was opened to the public in 1967. By 1969, the staff had prepared a preliminary inventory of the papers (archival inventories are called "finding aids," and they're not usually exhaustive inventories; they're guides). One person who came to see Frankfurter's papers that year was a man named Roger K. Newman. "I got half my education reading his letters," Newman told me. He decided, in 1969, that he wanted to see Frankfurter's Harvard papers, too.

"I am a graduate student at the City University of New York, presently gathering material for a Master's thesis on Mr. Justice Black which will eventually be expanded into a doctoral dissertation," Newman wrote to Bickel on January 2, 1970. In fact, Newman, twenty-two, would graduate later that month from Hunter College with a bachelor's degree in political science. Bickel put him off: he told him to write to Hugo Black.

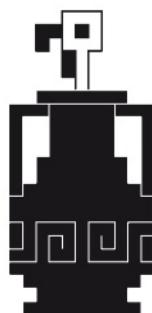
Bickel then attempted to recruit a biographer from among his Yale Law School students. He tapped Richard Danzig, a twenty-five-year-old former Rhodes scholar. Bickel believed—hoped—that the talented Danzig was preparing for a career as a scholar. In February, 1970, Danzig submitted to

Bickel a formal request for permission to use the Frankfurter papers at Harvard. "Danzig's record speaks for itself," Bickel wrote to Freund.

Newman graduated from college, and spent a few weeks in the summer of 1970 reading Frankfurter's papers at the Library of Congress. Already, some of the papers may have been missing—there were rumors that Freedman, inadvertently and unknowingly, had bundles of Frankfurter's papers in his hotel room in Winnipeg—although it would have been impossible to tell just what was missing, both then and later, since no version of the finding aid ever listed every item in the papers, only every folder.

Newman took a job teaching at a public school in New York. He was trying to avoid the draft, and he was also eager to make a career as a legal scholar, an outsider attempting to break into a tightly closed and fiercely guarded world. He took classes at night and pored over the Xeroxes he'd made in the Library of Congress. He wrote to Hiss in January, 1971, and to Bickel shortly thereafter, saying that he wanted to publish a collection of "Frankfurter's extrajudicial correspondence." Hiss told Newman that he could have permission to publish the collection, but only if he agreed to two conditions: Hiss and Freund would have the ultimate decision over the selection of the letters, and a portion of the royalties from the resulting book would go to Frankfurter's widow.

Without having agreed to these conditions, Newman attempted to sell his edition of Frankfurter's papers to a publisher. In April, 1971, he wrote to Elisabeth Sifton, at Viking, and to Richard Kluger, at Atheneum. Sifton called Freund and forwarded her exchange with "the mysterious Mr. Newman" to Freund and Bickel, adding, in a postscript, "He seems like a rather dim bulb." She deemed the book unworthy of consideration. Kluger consulted Bickel, who told him to turn Newman down. Kluger wrote to Newman, "You have not been designated the keeper of Frankfurter's papers." On June 17th, Hiss withdrew his conditional consent of Newman's project, writing, "This decision is final." Newman pressed on. In August, 1971, he wrote to Freund requesting an interview: "Would you talk to me about Justice Frankfurter?"



In October, 1971, Kluger asked Freund and Bickel whether he could see the Harvard papers for a book he was writing about *Brown v. Board of Education*. "I appreciate the policy—and indeed respect the wisdom behind it—of not allowing every wayfaring scholar, not to mention dabblers and rank amateurs, to sift through the Justice's papers," Kluger wrote. Unlike the young and inexperienced Newman, Kluger had a contract with Knopf, and enclosed a letter from its editor-in-chief, Robert Gottlieb. Freund and Bickel agreed to grant Kluger permission to see the files relating to *Brown v. Board*.

The struggle over Frankfurter's papers took place in the shadows of a stage dominated by the Court itself. Hugo Black was dying, and another Justice was about to leave the Court, too: John Harlan had cancer. "We may have a double play here," Nixon's Attorney General, John Mitchell, told the President.

Nixon had a terrible record with nominations to the Court. In 1969, he had nominated Clement Haynsworth, a federal judge from South Carolina. The Senate voted down the nomination, the first time that had happened since 1930. In 1970, Nixon nominated another Southern judge, G. Harrold Carswell; he was voted down, too. Both judges had checkered records on segregation. In September and October of 1971, Nixon and Mitchell debated possible nominees. "I have noticed in the past few days that your name has been mentioned twice in the *Times* in connection with the vacancies on the Court," Newman wrote to Bickel on October 4, 1971. "I can only wish you the best of luck."

"A Frankfurter-type is fine," Nixon told Mitchell, so long as he wasn't a liberal. "I can't handle that." Nixon dropped Bickel, and toyed with the idea of appointing Senator Robert Byrd, who had never practiced law. "Put his name in, yeah," Nixon told Mitchell. "Frankfurter didn't practice law! Not a day. Did he?" (He did.) Byrd was a ploy. Nixon told an aide that "the purpose of that was to scare the hell out of the liberals, so that when we appointed somebody that was not a member of the Ku Klux Klan" they'd accept him. On October 15th, Kluger sent a letter to Bickel regarding his request to see the Frankfurter papers,

adding, "I am appalled by the spectacle of the President of the United States conducting the crucial selection process of two new Justices as if it were a Miss Rheingold contest." On October 21st, Nixon announced his nominees: Lewis Powell and William Rehnquist. He'd settled on Rehnquist less than twelve hours before the announcement, and Rehnquist hadn't been vetted. He wasn't even told that he was being considered until the morning of the announcement.

Rehnquist's confirmation hearings were held in November, 1971. In December, on the eve of the Senate vote, the *Newsweek* reporter Robert Shogan released a memo that Rehnquist had written to Jackson in 1952. Shogan got the memo from Kurland when he called to interview him and Kurland rifled through the Jackson papers in his office and mentioned that he had an interesting memo. In the memo, which is titled "A Random Thought on the Segregation Cases," Rehnquist advised Jackson about the matter of racial segregation. "I realize that it is an unpopular and unhumanitarian position, for which I have been excoriated by 'liberal' colleagues," Rehnquist wrote, "but I think *Plessy v. Ferguson* was right and should be reaffirmed." It seemed very likely to sink the nomination.

In response, Rehnquist submitted a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee, insisting, bizarrely, that the memo reflected Jackson's views, not his. Another former Jackson clerk, Donald

Cronson, sent a cable to Washington from London which seemed to support Rehnquist's story. But Elsie Douglas told a *Washington Post* reporter that Jackson did not ask his clerks to prepare statements expressing the Justice's views, and that Rehnquist had "smeared the reputation of a great Justice." It appeared to many people that Rehnquist had lied to the Senate. On December 10, 1971, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee threatened to continue the hearings after the holiday. Nixon responded by calling for a special session. "We'll let those bastards talk through Christmas," he told his aide Bob Haldeman.

One document that was once among Frankfurter's papers but is now absent is a letter that Rehnquist wrote to Frankfurter in 1955. In 2012, two legal scholars, Brad Snyder and John Q. Barrett, published a fascinating law-review article in which they attempted to reconstruct that letter. This trick was possible because Frankfurter showed Rehnquist's letter to Bickel and to E. Barrett Prettyman, another of his former clerks, to see what they made of it. Their replies support the contention that the views Rehnquist expressed in his 1952 memo to Jackson were Rehnquist's own, not Jackson's. If Rehnquist's letter had been found among Frankfurter's papers at the Library of Congress, in December, 1971, Snyder and Barrett concluded, it "would have been a bombshell at his Supreme Court confirmation hearings."

But it wasn't a bombshell, because it



wasn't presented. Kurland didn't have it. Elsie Douglas didn't have it. No one knows who had it.

When the Senate confirmed Rehnquist's nomination, Nixon called Rehnquist to congratulate him. He said, "Be as mean and rough as they said you were. Okay?" Rehnquist took a seat on the Court in January, 1972. In August, scholars using the Frankfurter papers at the Library of Congress began reporting to the staff that a great number of documents were missing.

**A**t first, the staff at the library assumed that the missing items had been misfiled, but in November, 1972, the library checked the entire collection against the finding aid as best it could. "We realized we had been robbed blind," one librarian said. The missing documents appeared to have been carefully chosen: they included the most significant items in the collection. The library called the F.B.I. "Whoever did it must have a twist in his head," Roy Basler, the chief manuscript librarian, said. "I can't conceive of someone doing this sort of thing and not having something wrong with him."

The special agent in charge suspected that the thief was a scholar, and the F.B.I. hoped to gain the return of the papers even at the price of immunity for the thief. That was likely among the reasons the story was kept from the press while federal agents went through call slips—known in the Library of Congress as "signature cards"—to identify suspects and summon them for questioning. In March, 1973, an F.B.I. agent interviewed Michael Parrish, a history professor at the University of California, San Diego, who had been a student of Bickel's. He asked Parrish who else was sitting at his table in the Reading Room when he used the papers. Parrish told the F.B.I. that he'd consulted the missing volumes of the diaries as recently as October, 1971, "so the thefts must have taken place after that." Parrish wrote to Bickel, "The idiot responsible should be shot."

Parrish's tip might have helped narrow the investigation. On March 22, 1973, an F.B.I. agent in Boston visited the Harvard Law School Library to get the names of people who had requested permission from Freund and Bickel to

## TUCSON, MONDAY LOVE

She lost her hat in the a.m.—  
in front of the Laundromat where she has been unconscious  
in the hammock of his narrative  
for most of this day—the snake  
in the tree above them  
was digesting a small deer—  
the deer's bones like a ghost ship  
blossoming as a mere trick inside a clear bottle—

it now sails past the day moon on her long bare arm  
which she scratches  
with the calloused toe  
of a croissant, the  
coffee is bitter enough. She says  
to the colonized moon, to its residential rich,  
"I've always hated the traffic in this town—  
its miracle of legumes and fish."

—Norman Dubie

read Harvard's Frankfurter papers in 1971 and 1972. That search—which I've re-done—would have pointed them to Danzig, Kluger, Parrish, Newman, and Mary Frances Berry, who had just published her first book, "Black Resistance, White Law." But Berry, Danzig, and Kluger had all been granted permission to see at least a portion of the Harvard papers, and the F.B.I. believed that the thief was someone who'd been denied permission. (All three told me they were never questioned.)

In July of 1973, the special agent heading the investigation in Washington filed a report regarding the possible indictment of a new "prime suspect." A redacted F.B.I. memo explains that this man "developed as a suspect" because the investigation of signature cards at the Library of Congress "indicated that he had reviewed the majority" of the stolen papers, while other lines of investigation had found that he "had made inquiries prior to the theft with the executor of the late Frankfurter's estate for review of papers" and that the request was rejected, and that "he has made similar inquiries at the Harvard Law School Library." (Another redacted F.B.I. memo refers to "a prime suspect who is a lawyer in New York who had been doing research on these papers," which might be a different suspect but appears to be the same man.)

Except for the part about being a lawyer, this description fits only Newman. The report was forwarded to the Justice Department on August 10, 1973. And then there was a leak.

**S**cholar Steals Frankfurter Papers," the political columnist Jack Anderson wrote on September 14, 1973, which is how the public first learned of the heist, and which is also the point at which a story about the ill consequences of judicial secrecy and authorized biography turns into a story about the ill consequences of anonymous sources. In the first of three columns about the Frankfurter papers, Anderson described the theft and the investigation—"the quest has reached a dead end"—and offered "to act as an intermediary between the unknown scholar and the Library." He said that if the thief gave him the papers he'd return them, and would "guarantee not to reveal his name or otherwise identify him."

Anderson, who had an office on the ninth floor of a building on K Street, was the most influential political columnist in the country. His daily column, "The Washington Merry-Go-Round," was syndicated in around seven hundred newspapers. He was on 'Good Morning America' every day; he was on Mutual Radio every night; he was in

the Washington *Post* every day, seven days a week," one of his former reporters, Bob Owens, reminded me. In addition to Owens, Anderson had several other reporters, including Brit Hume (now a senior political analyst at Fox News), Jack Cloherty (now a producer at ABC News), and Les Whitten (now retired). They scrambled for stories. "It was an absolute furnace," Hume told me. "You had to be shovelling material in there constantly." Anderson essentially had a monopoly on leaks and scandals. "He was the only game in town," Cloherty said.

Anderson hated Nixon, and Nixon hated Anderson. At the end of 1971, Anderson made available to news outlets leaked documents revealing the duplicity of Nixon's policy during the war between India and Pakistan. Hoover called Anderson "a jackal." "Hoover's Trash Shows He's Human," Anderson titled a column in 1971. After looking for evidence that Hoover was a homosexual, Anderson reported that the director of the F.B.I. suffered from heartburn: his trash was full of Gelusil tablets.

Anderson was followed, and his phone was tapped. Hendrik Hertzberg, in a canny piece that appeared in this magazine on January 22, 1972, asked Anderson whether "Washington's fondness for secrecy had grown in recent years." Anderson said "Yes." Hertzberg asked, "What would you do if the government raided your office right now?" Anderson replied, "I would *howl*."

In March, 1972, Morley Safer profiled Anderson on "60 Minutes." "You can hardly pass a Washington landmark these days without recalling a reputation that Jack Anderson destroyed, a scandal exposed, a revelation of the big lie in high places," Safer said. In May, Anderson was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting. The other big winner that year was the *New York Times*, for publishing the Pentagon Papers. Both awards were controversial, as Mark Feldstein reports in a recent biography of Anderson. The trustees of Columbia University, which awards the Pulitzer Prizes, issued a press release expressing disagreement with the Pulitzer board. One trustee said, "If you crib documents and then put them in the paper, that's just not

good journalism." Questions about the press, leaks, and anonymous sources were before the Supreme Court that spring, too. In June, the Court issued a landmark decision in *Branzburg v. Hayes* (Rehnquist joining a 5-4 majority), ruling that the First Amendment does not protect a reporter who refuses to reveal his sources before a grand jury; the Court has never again ruled on this question.

Anderson's Pulitzer Prize didn't end the government harassment. On January 31, 1973, the F.B.I. arrested Les Whitten; he was charged with stealing documents belonging to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Reporters began wearing buttons that read, "Free Les Whitten." The charges against Whitten had been trumped up; they were dropped. That spring, Anderson published grand-jury records that had been leaked in the Watergate investigation. But the breaking of the Watergate story marked the end of the era of Anderson. It was the biggest scoop on Nixon, and Anderson hadn't got it.

By the summer of 1973, the world was riveted by the Watergate hearings, and Anderson and his legmen were scrambling for stories. Maybe the Frankfurter heist appealed because it involved *returning* government documents. F.B.I. memos suggest that Whitten learned of the Frankfurter theft in September, from someone at the Library of Congress, when he called to ask about an unrelated investigation: Yvonne Horner, a clerk in the subject-cataloguing division of the library, was arrested in connection with an undercover F.B.I. investigation of the theft of thousands of first editions. (Horner seems to have been either carrying them out in her bag or to have been shipping the books to her home address from the library's mail room.) Whitten has said that he got the story from a source inside the F.B.I. It's possible that the F.B.I. leaked the story to Whitten, hoping to flush out the thief, a not uncommon practice. But Hume finds this theory unlikely. "It's a two-cushion bank shot," he says.

However Whitten found out about the theft, he really did want to get the papers back. According to an F.B.I. memo written a few days before Anderson's column, "Whitten said that they

have attempted to write this column very carefully so that whoever has the papers will not destroy them."

On October 12, 1973, Anderson received five manila envelopes in the mail. They contained pages and pages of documents—all photocopies. Whitten had a clerk make photocopies of the photocopies; then he destroyed the envelopes. That afternoon, he called the Library of Congress and told the acting chief of the Manuscript Division, John C. Broderick, that he wanted to arrange a meeting. They met in the bar of the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel. Whitten brought the photocopies and said, according to Broderick, that Anderson was to get "as much publicity and ballyhoo as possible," making him promise not to tell anyone about the photocopies until Anderson could deliver them, in person, to the Librarian of Congress.

Six days later, Anderson turned up on the front steps of the library, trailed by a ten-man CBS News camera crew. "Thief Heeds Plea to Return Papers," Anderson titled his column on Friday, October 19th, announcing his heroic role in the recovery of Frankfurter's papers. That day, he also wrote to U.S. Attorney General Elliot Richardson—another former clerk of Felix Frankfurter's—offering to help secure the return of the remaining documents and, possibly, the originals. Meanwhile, Whitten, realizing that he had mistakenly given to the library some of the first-generation photocopies—which, presumably, had fingerprints on them—called the Manuscript Division and demanded their return. Amazingly, the library complied. Whitten made another set of photocopies, and likely destroyed the last of the first-generation photocopies. On the very day that Anderson offered to coöperate with the Justice Department, Whitten took back the only remaining physical evidence tying the theft to the thief.

CBS never ran the story. The next day, October 20th, Nixon ordered Richardson to fire the Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, and Richardson resigned in protest, in what became known as the Saturday Night Massacre. Anderson ran one more story about the theft in his next column, on October 21st. But the

Frankfurter story was most decidedly not a scoop in the fall of 1973, when the American Presidency was unravelling. What, after all, was the story of the Frankfurter papers compared with the story of the Nixon tapes?

For a time, the F.B.I. continued the investigation. On October 31, 1973, the man who had been denied access to the papers and whom the bureau had described as its prime suspect was questioned by a federal grand jury. He denied any knowledge of the theft. The records of the grand jury are sealed. I asked Roger Newman if he was the suspect who had been brought before the grand jury. He said yes. "I told them I didn't know much, and that was that," he said. I asked him if the experience had been terrifying. He said, "If you tell the truth, and you have nothing to worry about, it can't be that terrifying."

On November 8, 1973, an F.B.I. agent reported to the director that the bureau had no proof tying the prime suspect to the theft. On December 6, 1973, the Justice Department replied to Anderson, declining his offer of help. It referred to the investigation as ongoing, and expressed concern that Anderson had destroyed the envelopes in which the photocopies were returned. In March, 1974, without officially closing the case, the F.B.I. effectively ended the investigation.

In May, 1974, Philip Kurland, acting as a consultant to the Senate Judiciary Committee, reviewed transcripts of the Watergate tapes and concluded that Nixon may have committed crimes warranting impeachment. Nixon resigned on August 9th. He might have destroyed the tapes if he could. To stop him, Congress passed the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act, in December, 1974. The act might have altered the fate of the Justices' papers, too; it provided for the establishment of a seventeen-member commission to study, and make recommendations, regarding the records of federal officials in all three branches of the government. The report of the Public Documents Commission, issued in 1977, urged that the Justices' papers, like the President's papers, be made public property, and opened to the public fifteen years after they leave the Court. That measure was not adopted.

Roger Newman enrolled in a Ph.D. program in history at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, in the fall of 1974. He had long since abandoned his plan to edit a collection of Felix Frankfurter's "extrajudicial correspondence" and, instead, devoted his attention to Hugo Black. In 1976, he finished his master's thesis and then dropped out of graduate school. For years, he worked on a biography of Black, with the coöperation of Black's family. His "Hugo Black: A Biography" appeared in 1994 and was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize. Writing a biography of Hugo Black was a challenge, Newman has said, given how many of Black's papers had been burned. "The loss of these records was history's loss," Newman said. "A loss for all of us."

Richard Kluger published "Simple Justice," his study of *Brown v. Board of Education*, in 1976. It's still in print. Mary Frances Berry is a professor of legal history at the University of Pennsylvania. Clinton appointed her chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Michael Parrish's biographical study, "Felix Frankfurter and His Times," appeared in 1982. Parrish, an emeritus professor, is teaching in the Czech Republic on a Fulbright fellowship. Richard Danzig wrote two articles about Frankfurter's role in the flag-salute cases and, for a while, taught at Stanford, but gave up teaching for public service. In 1977, he began working for the Department of Defense. He served as Secretary of the Navy during the Clinton Administration, and was a senior national-security adviser during Obama's first campaign for President. Today, he's an adviser for the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. No full-dress biography of Felix Frankfurter has ever been written.

In 1993, immediately following the death of Thurgood Marshall, the Library of Congress opened his papers to the public. "I speak for a majority of the active Justices of the Court when I say that we are both surprised and disappointed by the library's decision to give unrestricted public access to Justice Thurgood Marshall's papers," Rehnquist wrote to the Librarian of Congress. "Unless there is some presently unknown basis for the library's action, we think it is such that future donors of judicial papers will be inclined to look elsewhere

for a repository." A Senate subcommittee chaired by Joseph Lieberman convened a day of hearings into the furor over Marshall's papers. "I, for one, am not, at this time, proposing that we adopt something that might be called a Judicial Records Act," Lieberman said. "But I do think that the process of developing a set of guidelines for the preservation of, and access to, these judicial documents needs to begin." Rehnquist sent Lieberman a letter of protest, insisting that no legislation was necessary. Five witnesses testified, the hearings adjourned, and that was the end of that.

Like many Justices, some historians and reporters are opposed to having Congress set an archival policy for the Supreme Court, citing the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary. But nothing is preventing the Court from setting its own policy. About a decade ago, the Rehnquist Court tried to establish guidelines. Harry Blackmun had retired in 1994 and died in 1999, having arranged for his papers to go to the Library of Congress and to be opened five years after his death. They were unsealed in 2004, ten years after he left the Court, but, because there had been no turnover on the Court between 1994 and 2004 (aside from Blackmun's replacement), a decade didn't seem long enough to his colleagues on the bench. They held a discussion, asking, "Should we impose on ourselves some kind of policy that will prevent this from happening in the future?" They couldn't agree, and the matter was dropped.

The statute of limitations on the theft of Frankfurter's papers had expired by the nineteen-nineties. Neither Anderson nor Whitten ever revealed the name of the thief, if they even knew it. Anderson is dead; Whitten has said that he never learned who stole the papers. Hume, Cloherty, and Owens don't remember where Whitten got the tip-off about the Frankfurter theft. "We called our chief source O.T. Transom," Owens told me. "For 'over the transom.'"

The papers of U.S. Supreme Court Justices enter the office of history over the transom, too, if they come in at all. Paper burns. Texts vanish. E-mails are deleted. Sometimes even sneakier things happen. Not a single page of the missing papers of Felix Frankfurter has ever been found. ♦

## SHINING CITY

BY IAN FRAZIER

**T**hen Brother Deserve stood in the tent meeting before all the assembled brothers and sisters, and he prophesied.

"I have had a powerful vision," he said. "Here in this wilderness of the Indiana Territory, on the twentieth day of November, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and nine, I lay on the bare ground at the site of our future house of worship and I dreamed. A light snow fell upon me, but I noticed it not. Like Jacob of old, I put a stone beneath my head for a pillow. My badger-fur coat was my only blanket and the stars above me were my roof. And I saw not angels in the firmament ascending and descending on a heavenly ladder, as were vouchsafed unto Jacob—no, I beheld a vision of what is to be, here, on this same prairie where we are standing, two hundred and five years from this very day.

"My friends, I saw the holy city of Jerusalem rising from this land! Strewn like countless jewels were the lights of her habitations, and the pleasantness of her aspects bid me enter. Hard by a wide and radiant roadway I saw a bright sign of about twenty cubits in height, and on that sign I beheld a single numeral, and a single word. The numeral, it was a seven, orange and scarlet in color; and, as for the word, it also was a number, but spelt out in glowing letters, emerald green, and those letters read, 'ELEVEN.' And the seven and the eleven were upon the sign. And the sun ascended into the firmament, above towering clouds stacked upon clouds, and shafts of brilliant sunlight shone upon the promised city. On one side of the roadway, half a furlong beyond the glowing sign, I saw many banners, as of an army, and a glorious host of conveyances—wheels next to wheels, as if of wheels there could be no end.

"And in the nearer part of this field, beside the tall windows of a crystal building, all at once a gigantic, agitated figure rose upright! Now seemingly solid, and yet somehow insubstantial, but having the general lineaments of a man, it stood suddenly with a convulsion of its spine, and flung its arms into the air, and waved them

wildly, and then collapsed like an empty garment, and lay upon an engine similar to a bellows at its feet. Again the bellows sound roared, and again the figure leapt up and flung its arms to the sky. As I looked on, it did this many times, and I wondered at it, and was terrified.

"All along the brilliant avenue were divers interesting works and enterprises. I witnessed storefronts where one could



obtain instruction in the martial arts of the Orient, and parlors in which members of the populace could cause their skin to be more tan, and useful places of exchange where notes drawn upon a local bank or issued by the state could be converted to cash money for a small fee. I saw eating establishments specializing in a kind of open-faced Italian pie, and offices of attorneys available to help those who had slipped and fallen, and clearly lighted venues in which the patrons could be marked with the latest and most intricate of tattoos, or could have previous, wrongly conceived tattoos removed, or (if they could not be removed) have them altered to different, less embarrassing tattoos. And everything was shining, and heavenly splendor was all around."

Brother Deserve's listeners sat in awe. Then an elder spoke. "Tell us, brother, about the human beings of this city that is to be raised up here," he said. "In your vision, did you see men and women like ourselves?"

"Yes, human beings there were," Brother Deserve replied. "But very little like ourselves. Look at us—broomstick bodies, yellow withague, some of us barely bones enough to hang our clothing on. No, the inhabitants of the city in my vision did not resemble us, for these were good-sized men and women, some as big around as four or five of us together! Their spreading forms showed the richness of the land, with flesh upon their limbs of vaster extent than we could possibly imagine, so that their very shirts and trousers could not completely cover buttocks, shins, and forearms, all plump and sleek as the butcher's dog!"

"Praise be!" the elder exclaimed, and the whole assembly agreed that the news rejoiced their hearts.

"I had a conversation as I made my way along the avenue," Brother Deserve continued, lost again in his memory. "In my right hand I held an object of about the size of a weaver's shuttle, and I lifted this object to my head, and from it a voice spoke unto me, and the voice said, 'Where are you?' And I replied, 'Here I am.' And the voice demanded, 'Where is 'here'?' I fell on my face in unworthiness and said I truly did not know. The voice said, 'How long do you think it will take for you to get here?' I replied, 'You know this answer, not I.' Then the voice asked, 'Tell me what you see, and we will tell you how to go.' And I said, 'I see pits of endless flames of fire, and a sign that says, 'Bar-B-Q Breakfast All Day.'" And the object made a noise like a frog peeping, and I heard no more."

Then the sky darkened, the canvas of the meeting tent ripped in half, and God Almighty spoke from the clouds. "BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS," God said. "THIS BROTHER DESERVE WHOM YOU HAVE LISTENED TO IS MISTAKEN. EVERYTHING HE SAID IS MADE UP BY HIM, AND WRONG. WHAT HE FORETOLD IS NEVER ACTUALLY GOING TO HAPPEN. TRUST IN ME, AND HAVE FAITH. KEEP DOING WHAT YOU ARE DOING. EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE GREAT! HEAR ME!"

After the assembled brothers and sisters had recovered from their fright, they took Brother Deserve to the bank of the Wabash River and set him adrift in a small flat-bottomed boat with a cask of salt pork, a tin of pilot bread, and the latest real-estate listings for parts downstream. He was not heard from again. ♦

## DAYS IN THE BRANCH

*Remembering the South in the city.*

BY JOSEPH MITCHELL



**J**oseph Mitchell was born in 1908 into a prosperous family of North Carolina cotton and tobacco growers. At the age of twenty-one, he came to New York City to pursue a career as a writer, and he started contributing to this magazine four years later. In the late sixties and the early seventies, he began writing a memoir. What follows was planned as the second chapter but was never finished.

**I**t is odd, to begin with, that I ever had any connection with New York City at all. The great majority of my ancestors have been farmers or mixed up in some way with farming, and I come from a part of the country—Robeson

County, North Carolina—where the people tend to stay put. One day recently I was in the Local History Room of the Public Library. While waiting for a book to be delivered from the stacks, I dawdled along the open shelves that line one side of the room, killing time by reading titles, and I came across a set of volumes on each of whose spines was lettered: "CENSUS 1790 / HEADS OF FAMILIES." I opened the first volume and saw that the full title was "Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790." I got down the volume for North Carolina and took it over to a reading table and looked up Robeson County and

found it, and then I looked up the section in the lower part of the county in which I was born and grew up and in which most of the people in my family still live and found it, and then I started going down the columns of names. The names were not listed alphabetically but evidently in the order that they were taken down by the census taker as he made his rounds. I had not gone far before I began to smile with the pleasure of recognition, for many of the old names suddenly and unexpectedly come upon were very familiar and dear and magical to me, and I soon saw that a much higher proportion than I had ever realized of the names that are around in my section of Robeson County today were also around as far back as 1790. 1790 names are, in fact, with a few newer ones, the most numerous and the most characteristic names of the countryside today—Pitman, for example, although now generally spelled Pittman, and Lewis and Inman and Grimsley and Musslewhite or Musslewhite (now spelled Musselwhite) and Hedgepath (now spelled Hedgepeth) and Griffin and Grantham and Thompson and Mitchell and Ashley and Townsend and Atkinson and Bullock and Purvis and Leggett and Jenkins and Page and Oliver and Barnes and Gaddy and Rogers and Strickland and Harding (now spelled Hardin) and McMillen (now spelled McMillan) and Ivey and Watson and Hunt and Hill and Stephens and Oxendine and Stone and Davis and Britt and Lockileer (now spelled Locklear) and Taylor and Turner and Lee and Lowry. When I go down to Robeson County for a visit, and ride around the countryside with my father or one of my brothers or sisters or brothers-in-law or sisters-in-law or nephews or nieces or cousins, these are the names that I see most frequently on the fronts of stores and filling stations and sawmills and cotton gins and tobacco warehouses and on the sides of trucks and on roadside mailboxes and on miscellaneous roadside signs.

There is a newspaper published in Lumberton, which is the largest town in Robeson County and the county seat, named the *Robesonian*. It is an old paper—it was a hundred years old several years ago—that prints news from all over the county. Shortly after I came to

New York City, I subscribed to the *Robesonian*, out of homesickness, and I still subscribe to it; it is as necessary to me and as much a part of my life as the *New York Times*. It is a daily paper, but owing to some peculiarity in the delivery of second-class mail in New York City it arrives at my apartment house every third or fourth day in batches of two or three or four issues, each issue tightly rolled and tightly wrapped in a brown-paper wrapper, and when I open my mailbox and find a batch waiting for me I am almost as glad to see it as I was during my first year or so in the city, when every now and then something I saw or heard or tasted or smelled or touched would remind me sometimes unaccountably of something at home and I would have a spasm of homesickness so sudden and so startlingly painful that I would have trouble breathing and would feel as if my insides were caving in and would have to take a deep breath and keep on taking deep breaths until I got over it. Reading the *Robesonian* has long since become one of the rituals of my life. I tear the wrappers off, and then I arrange the issues in the order of their day of publication, and then I sit down and read them in that order. I seldom spend much time with the front page of an issue of the *Robesonian*. The front page is devoted to important international, national, state, and county-seat news, and that isn't what I am looking for. I am looking for scraps and crumbs and odds and ends and bits and pieces of news about people down in my section of the county—people for the most part bearing the family names that I have just mentioned, people that I am linked to by blood or marriage or old associations, people that I know in fact and people that I know only by hearsay (that is, by hearing my relatives at home and my old friends at home speak of them through the years), and people that I don't know from Adam (after all, I have been away for over forty years) but whose names, both family and given (a great many given names are repeated generation after generation down there), put together with the names of the communities they live in, tell me beyond any doubt exactly who they are. I glance over the front page, and then I turn to page 2 and look through the "Deaths and Funerals" department, which is a

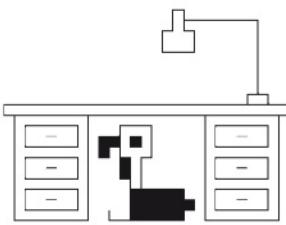
countywide department, and see if there are any names in it that mean anything to me. And then I look through the district-court news, which is usually on the same page, and see if there are any cases from Fairmont and Rowland, the only towns in my part of the county that have district courts. And then I turn to the "Social Activities" department, which is another countywide department and often covers a couple of pages, and look through the announcements of engagements and accounts of weddings and the announcements of births and the accounts of bridge-club meetings and garden-club meetings and book-club meetings and P.T.A. meetings and W.C.T.U. meetings and Daughters of the American Revolution meetings and United Daughters of the Confederacy meetings. Scattered through several pages in the back of the paper are columns and parts of columns of news items of purely local interest sent in by correspondents in the majority of the towns, crossroads villages, and rural communities in the county, and I look for those from my section of the county and go through them—"News Items from Around Fairmont," "News Items from Around McDonald," "News Items from Around Rowland," "News Items from Around Marietta," "News Items from Around Barnesville," and "News Items from Around White Pond." Lumped in under these headings, as "Around" indicates, are items about people who live in even smaller rural communities, such as the Ivey's Crossroads community and the Bethesda community and the Baltimore community and the Black Ankle community. The items tell, in a very few words, who visited who, who is home sick, who entered the hospital for observation, who underwent surgery, who went on a business trip (or a shopping trip or a sightseeing trip or a fishing trip or a hunting trip), who left for college, who had a surprise birthday party, who moved into a new house, who had a golden-wedding anniversary, who left to attend the graduation of a son or daughter, who left to attend the funeral of a relative, and so on. I enjoy reading the news items. I look upon the items in each issue of the *Robesonian* as a few more paragraphs or pages or even chapters in a novel that I have been reading

for a long time now and that I expect to keep on reading as long as I live, a sort of never-ending to-be-continued serial about the ups and downs of a group of interrelated rural and small-town families in the South, a sort of ever-flowing roman-fleuve. Because I know the person or persons mentioned in an item, and know or knew their fathers and their mothers, and in some cases their grandfathers and their grandmothers, and in a few cases, for that matter, their great-grandfathers and their great-grandmothers, I can sense the inner significance and the inner importance of the occurrence that the item tells about; it lurks between the lines. Quite often, what is between the lines of an item is far more interesting than the item itself. I always look for a department called "Realty Transfers" and go through the entries in it, such as "Asberry Pittman Ivey et als to Macduff Griffin Bullock et ux, Fairmont, 26.9 acres." And I always go through the legal notices, most of which have to do with the appointments of executors of estates or with the sale of farmland or timberland or other property to settle estates. And I always read the advertisements of auction sales of used farm machinery and equipment. To me, the lists in these advertisements are lyric, they are suitable to be sung to the lyre: "one Roanoke Tobacco Looper, one Sub-soiler, one Gang Disk, one Bush and Bog Disk Like New, one Leveling Harrow, one I H C Super-H Four-Row Cotton Sprayer, one Stalk Cutter, one Lime Spreader, one Ditch Bank Scoop, one Middle Buster, one Blue Duster, one High Drum Picker Head, one Water Rank Mounted on a Trailer." I don't know why, but I long ago got in the habit of waiting until the last to read one thing; I seem to save it until the last as one sometimes saves a morsel of meat on one's plate until the last. After I have gone through the entire paper, I turn back to the front page and look down to the bottom of the page, where, over in the left corner, there is a two-paragraph department headed "Weather." A beautiful and fairly good-sized and fairly swift black-water river named the Lumber River flows through Lumberton—it is the county's principal watercourse—and in the "Weather" department the *Robesonian* customarily prints a single

sentence giving the depth of the river as measured that morning at a measuring station beside the Cutlar Moore Bridge, which is one of six bridges, counting the railroad bridge, that span the river inside Lumberton or on its edges; the sentence is usually the last one in the second paragraph. "The level of Lumber River was measured at 6.55 feet this morning at the Moore Bridge checkpoint, a slight rise over yesterday," the sentence might say, or "The Lumber River level was 8.10 feet this morning and steady," or "The Lumber River level was 10.28 feet this morning and falling." This scrap of obscure information always interests me very much; in fact, it is almost always the most interesting thing in the paper to me. Although the Lumber River is snakelike to a phenomenal degree and winds in and out and around and about and wanders though a lot of territory, it never at any point gets nearer than ten miles to my home. Even so, I have found that its depth is a rough index to the depth of scores of streams in the swamps and in the branches of swamps all over the lower part of the county, and once I know its depth at the Moore Bridge I can estimate the depth and visualize the general condition of several streams near my home, and of one in particular, the stream in Pittman Mill Branch, which is a branch of Old Field Swamp.

On its way to join Old Field Swamp, Pittman Mill Branch runs in back of my home—or, to be more exact, in back of the gardens and orchards and pastures in back of my home—and a stretch of about a quarter of a mile of it is owned by my father and has been since my childhood. Several years ago, the Army Engineers, in a flood-control project, cut a canal through the branch, and in the process a considerable section of the old stream was straightened out and incorporated into the canal. Also, little by little, over the years, the old bottoms and bogs and sinks and sloughs on both sides of the stream have been drained by a network of ditches designed by my father, and now, in most seasons, if you keep to the ditch banks, you can walk across the branch without getting your shoes wet. Also, although there are a great many old trees still standing in the branch, most of the very old ones that used to grow in the bottoms have been cut for timber and most of the vines that

used to hang between the trees have been chopped down and most of the underbrush has been thinned out. My father has sown grass seed here and there, and places that used to be under water most of the time or knee-deep in mud are now as green as lawns. Nevertheless, some wildness is still left in the branch, some of the old, old original wildness. Taking a walk in it, I always come across tracks of wild animals on the ditch banks and on the canal bank,



and I always see at least one wild animal of some kind. Early one morning last summer, around daybreak, going for a walk to the farther side of the branch, I saw a raccoon on the canal bank. It was eating a frog. A few minutes later, I saw a diamondback water snake. And then I saw an old and obese opossum crawl out of one of the ditches. It waddled along the ditch bank for a short distance and then abruptly darted through some bushes and into a hole in the base of the trunk of a dead tree. And then I saw a box turtle. And I saw a pair of muskrats. And then, passing through a grove of hickory trees, I sensed something moving along a limb far up above me, and glancing upward I saw fleetingly and out of the corner of an eye what I am sure was a wildcat or, as we call it, a bobcat. It is still possible to see a wide variety of birds in the branch, and a wide variety of insects, and a wide variety of wild flowers. When I think about the changes that the branch has undergone in the years that I have known it, however, my heart sinks. When I first knew it, as a child, and I sometimes marvel at this, it had hardly been touched by the axe and the crosscut saw and the ditchdigger's spade and the stump-digger's dynamite—it was still quite wild. Parts of it, in fact, were still primeval. The stream still ran in the same bed it had run in since time immemorial, and growing in sloughs along the banks of the stream and out in the wettest of the bottoms were scores of giant old virgin-growth

bald cypresses, a majestic tree with snuff-brown bark and ferny pale-green needles that rises out of the mud and the muddy water and goes straight up a hundred to a hundred and twenty-five feet and that sometimes lives to be a thousand years old or more and whose wood is so resistant to rot that boards sawed from it used to be used for coffins (up until my grandfather's generation, most country people in my part of the South were buried in family cemeteries in homemade cypress coffins) and for such things as shingles and gutters and rain pipes and watering troughs and for the sluices underneath water mills and for the water gates on rice plantations, and are even now used for such things as the kind of water tanks that sit unpainted and naked to the weather on stilts on the roofs of office buildings and apartment houses and hotels in New York City. In among the cypresses, but in drier locations, were giant old virgin black gums and giant old virgin tulip poplars. On the slopes rising gently upward from the banks of the stream on both sides of the branch were old long-leaf pines and old water oaks and old swamp maples and old sweet gum and old hollies and old magnolias and old sweet bay and old swamp hickories and old black walnuts and old wild persimmons and old wild cherries and old dogwoods. At the feet of many of these trees, ferns grew. On the trunks of many of them, mosses grew. On the upper limbs of many of them, mistletoe grew. The underbrush was dense. In it were clumps of huckleberry bushes and clumps of cattails and thickets of wild-plum trees and thickets of the kind of reeds that are used for fishing poles and thickets of blackberry canes and patches of wild strawberries and patches of wild roses and patches of wild violets, and clumps and thickets and patches of many other kinds of herbs, shrubs, and small trees. Vines overran the ground and overran the underbrush and overran the trees. Every tree no matter how young and spindly supported at least one vine, and running this way and that between the large trees were great briery ropes and nets and webs of intertwined vines of a dozen kinds. Wild-grape vines and bullbrier vines were the most prolific. In July and August, in some parts of the branch, you could reach up

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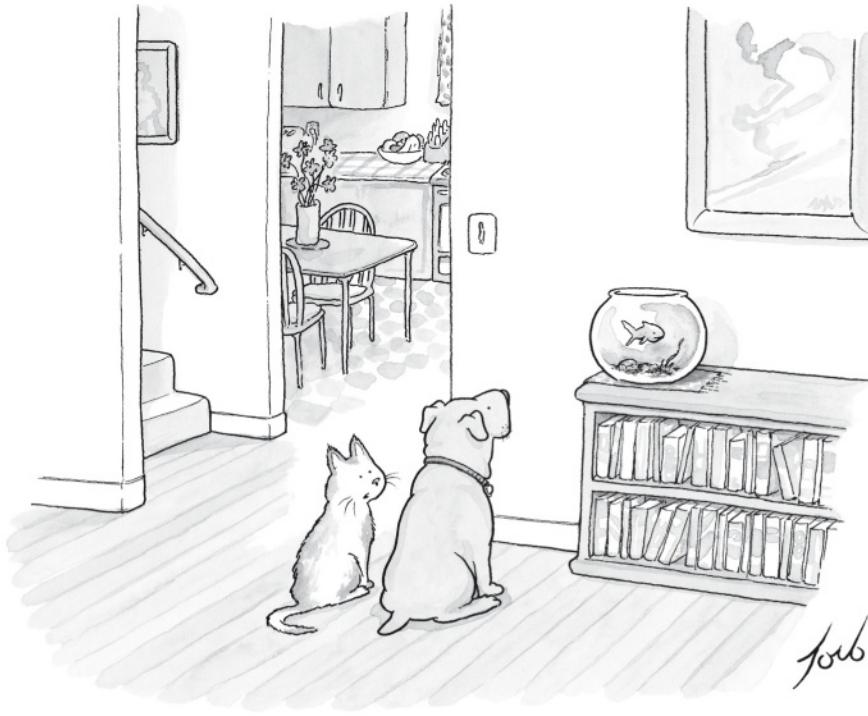
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*"Look, I know you and I have had our differences, but can we at least agree that the goldfish is pointless?"*

• •

almost anyplace and pick a handful of wild grapes—small, musky-flavored, not very juicy, blue-black ones that we called fox grapes, and plump, honey-sweet, juicy brown-speckled amber-green ones that we called scuppernongs.

I spent a large part of my childhood and youth in Pittman Mill Branch. From the time I was old enough to wander around by myself—old enough, that is, to be trusted to shut gates and to watch out for snakes—until I went away to college, I spent every moment in it that I possibly could. Quite often, in the winter, I went into the branch as soon as I got home from school and stayed in it the rest of the day. Quite often, in the summer, if I had no work to do for my father, I went into it early in the morning, right after breakfast, and stayed in it until dinner, which we had in the middle of the day, and then I went back and stayed in it until supper. Some days, I kept pretty close to the stream. I would walk beside it, climbing over the fence that marked the western boundary line of my father's land when I reached it and following the stream across other people's lands for several miles. I would walk slowly and keep looking into the water, studying it. The

water mesmerized me; everything in it interested me, still or moving, dead or alive; I was just as interested in a streak of a kind of algae known locally as frog snot or in a cluster of old dead cypress roots covered with snails as I was in the fish and the crawfish and the water bugs and the water snakes. The water was the color of whiskey or tea—from some substance in the leaves and pine needles and cypress needles rotting in it, I was always told. You weren't supposed to drink it—people said you could get chills and fevers, by which they meant malaria, from drinking branch water—but it looked clean enough to drink. Sometimes I would cut a reed and tie a line that I carried around in my watch pocket to the whip end of the reed and bait the hook with a worm or a grub or a mayfly or a June bug or a grasshopper and fish for a while. Sometimes, on very hot days, I would stop at a wide place in the stream, what we called a pool, and beat on the water with a stick to scare away the bullfrogs and the salamanders and the leeches and then go in swimming. I loved the smell of the stream—a smell of fish emanated from it, a smell that has always been pleasurable and even exciting to me, and underneath

this there was often a smell that reminded me of leaf mold and of root cellars and, by some odd link or association, of chrysanthemums—and I loved the smells, ranging from cloverly to delicately aromatic to pungent to rank, of the vegetation that grew on its banks. There were no well-defined paths in the branch and, walking along beside the stream not watching where I was going, I would brush against some of the plants with my pants legs or step on them, bruising them, whereupon their various and sometimes quite surprising fragrances would suddenly fill the air. And occasionally I would reach down and pull a handful of leaves from some aromatic plant—a kind that I especially liked, such as wild ginger or wax myrtle or dog fennel, or a kind that might be unfamiliar to me and, for all I knew, poisonous—and crush them in my hand and smell them. Hours later, sometimes, the smell would still be on my fingers. And quite often, at night, taking off my clothes and hanging them up before going to bed, I would smell the fragrances of aromatic plants on my pants legs.

Some days, instead of hanging around the stream, I would climb trees. Tree-climbing was exhilarating to me, and I discovered that I had a natural aptitude for it, and I got to be quite good at it; it is one of the few things I have ever been genuinely good at. Barefooted, and using a throw rope to draw myself up from one limb to another if the limbs were too widely spaced, I could climb some of the tallest trees in the branch. I designed the throw rope myself; it was a plowline with a succession of knots tied in it for hand-grips and with loops made of rags hung all along it for footholds and with a brickbat tied to one end of it so that that end would drop back down to me after I had thrown it over a limb. Sometimes, up in a tree in one of the thickly wooded parts of the branch, I would look for some overlapping limbs from a neighboring tree or for a connecting vine, and I would cross over to the neighboring tree on the strongest of these limbs or vines, risking my neck as often as not, and I would go on from that tree to another tree and keep on doing this until I reached a tree that had no overlapping limbs or connecting vines in it strong enough to support me. It was part of the game to go from tree to tree as rapidly as



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*Top to bottom, left to right: Niagara Falls, stunning in winter and illuminated at night; Blue Mountain Resort; The Toronto Christmas Market at the Distillery Historic District.*

**Snow is falling, bells are ringing, and stars are shining bright. Wintertime is the perfect time to see Ontario in all of its splendor.** Seize the season: Give friends and family the gift of wonderful memories and add sparkle to the holidays with a vacation experience in Ontario. Awe-inspiring natural wonders like Niagara Falls, pristine parkland, and abundant wildlife offer travellers nearly endless opportunities for outdoor adventure, while winter

excitement of a different sort beckons from Ontario's largest cities. From the diverse culinary offerings and lively entertainment scenes of Toronto to the historic and cultural riches of Ottawa, Canada's Capital, Ontario has something to satisfy any appetite. And being just an hour from New York by air, it's the ideal getaway destination that is surprisingly close to home.

**ONTARIO**  
CANADA



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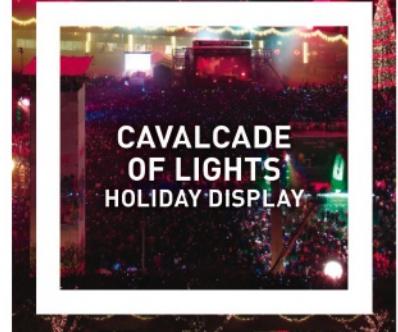
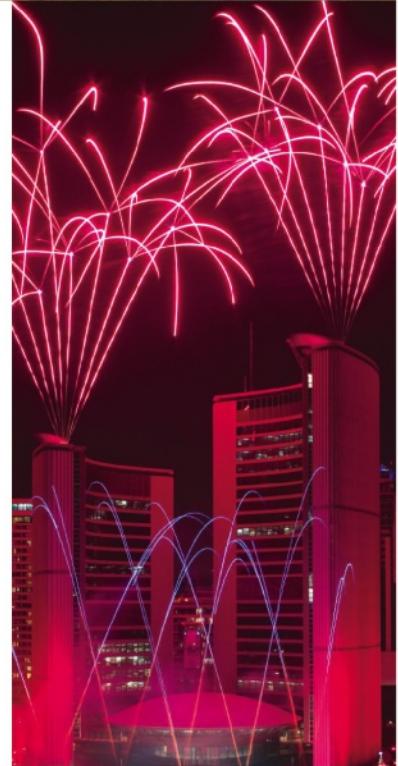
roster of internationally acclaimed dining destinations makes room for one more when celebrity chef Jamie Oliver opens his new restaurant, **Jamie's Italian**, in the new year.

The **Distillery Historic District** becomes the center of traditional holiday merriment with the opening of the annual **Toronto Christmas Market**, running through mid-December. With holiday decoration, choral performances, carnival rides, hot spiced cider, and all-around good cheer, the market is a terrific way to toast the start of the season.

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## Special Advertising Section



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Blue Mountain Resort offers guests full kitchen suites to cozy standard rooms in multiple configurations, making it an ideal spot for an extended family getaway or a romantic weekend escape for two. Discover how much there is to explore and enjoy in Ontario's only mountain village.

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For more information about booking a dream stay at Blue Mountain Resort, visit [BlueMountain.ca](http://BlueMountain.ca).

## Special Advertising Section

**Ottawa, Canada's Capital**, sparkles brighter than ever this holiday season. On display through early January, 300,000 dazzling lights illuminate downtown Ottawa as part of the annual **Christmas Lights Across Canada** event, celebrating 30 years this winter.

For the first two weeks of February, Ottawa hosts **Winterlude**, featuring musical performances, art installations, horse-drawn sleigh rides, giant ice sculptures, and special menus—plus North America's largest snow playground with customized sledding runs. Many of the festival's events take place on the frozen 4.8-mile stretch of **Rideau Canal**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which every winter becomes the world's largest skating rink.

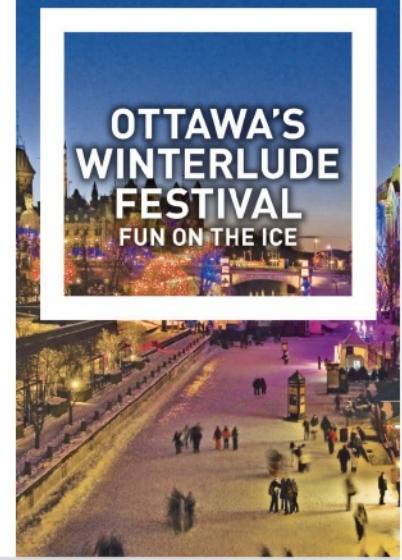
Stops at one or more of Ottawa's seven National Museums should be part of any visitor's itinerary. Spend some time with priceless works of art in the **National Gallery of Canada**, or totems in the Grand Hall in the **Canadian Museum of History**. Come face to face with a polar

bear as you learn about the mysteries of the Arctic at the **Canadian Museum of Nature**. At the **Canadian War Museum**, explore Canada's role in World War I on the centenary of its start, or turn your attention to winged machines in the sky at the **Canada Aviation and Space Museum**.

The fine flavors of Canadian and French culinary traditions are taught at Canada's prestigious **Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Arts Institute**. Located on the cooking school grounds and run by Executive Chef Yannick Anton, **Signatures Restaurant**, treats guests to spectacular cuisine served in the beautiful environment of the Munross mansion.

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IMAGES COURTESY OF ONTARIO TOURISM. PHOTO OF ALGONQUIN PROVINCIAL PARK © ROB STIMPSON PHOTO.

Within easy driving distance of Toronto and other urban centers, **Ontario Parks** offer truly exceptional getaways to wintertime visitors. **Arrowhead Provincial Park** draws cross-country ski enthusiasts to its many top-ranked routes and ice-skaters to the mile-long ice trail through the woods.

Just a few miles away is **Algonquin Provincial Park**, nearly 3,000 square miles of pristine wilderness and one of Ontario's most popular year-round travel destinations. The park's one-day **Winter in the Wild Festival**, takes place on February 14, 2015, and features guided snowshoe tours, a Wolf Howl, and expert-led discussions on everything from winter survival skills to nature photography.

For more information on making Ontario Parks part of your next vacation experience, visit [OntarioParks.com/winter](http://OntarioParks.com/winter).



possible. Sometimes I was Daniel Boone pursuing a hostile Indian chief and sometimes I was the hostile Indian chief; sometimes I was the Sheriff of Robeson County pursuing a convict who had escaped from the chain gang and sometimes I was the convict; sometimes I was a slave fleeing on the Underground Railroad and making a gap in my tracks to throw off the bloodhounds; sometimes I was Jan Ridd, the farmboy hero of my favorite novel, "Lorna Doone," fleeing from Lorna's captors, the outlaws of the Doone Valley in Exmoor in England, after a terribly dangerous meeting with Lorna in her secret bower in a glen (I didn't really know what a glen was, let alone a bower); sometimes I was a cattle rancher straight out of one of Zane Grey's Wild West novels, maneuvering myself limb by limb into eavesdropping distance of some rustlers sitting around a campfire; sometimes I was a bobcat (up in the trees, I often turned myself into an animal); and sometimes I was myself. I used to climb a tremendous white oak high up on the hill of the branch, from one of whose topmost limbs, hidden by leaves, I could look out on a wide panorama of small farms on the southern side of the branch mostly owned by Negro farmers and watch people at work in cotton and tobacco fields who were entirely oblivious of course to the fact that they were being watched and being watched secretly and from aloft and from afar, a situation that made me feel Olympian but at the same time curiously lonely and alien and uneasy and cut off from the rest of the human race, the way a spy might feel, or a Peeping Tom. In the bird-nesting season, I climbed to positions in trees from which I could look down and watch birds building nests or nesting or feeding the nestlings. In the spring and summer, a number of the trees in the branch—sweet bays, for example, and magnolias and tulip poplars—had spectacularly beautiful blossoms, and sometimes I would pick an armful of these blossoms and take them home to my mother and my sisters. And around Christmas I would go up in swamp maples, which, in that part of the South, are the best mistletoe trees, especially if they are very old and wind-shaken and lightning-struck and ringed with wood-pecker holes and dead at the top, and

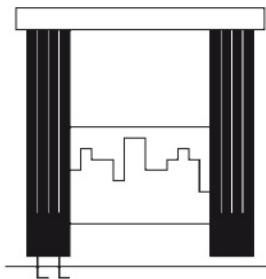
gather armfuls of mistletoe and take some of it home and some of it to school.

Some days, in June, July, and August, it would seem to me that the branch was overflowing with things to eat. On such days, I would often take a tin bucket along and pick huckleberries and take them home, and my mother or our cook, a Negro woman named Anna McNair, would make deep-dish huckleberry pies out of them. Or I would pick wild strawberries. Or I would pick wild blackberries—around home, they were called brierberries. Or I would pick a couple of buckets of wild plums—they were called Chickasaw plums—and my mother would make dozens of glasses of wild-plum jelly out of them; it was one of her specialties. She would set the glasses of ruby-red jelly on shelves in one of the kitchen windows and the morning sun hitting the window would transform it into a stained-glass window. Or I would pick a couple of buckets of wild grapes and my mother or Anna would make wild-grape-hull pies out of them, an old country-Southern dessert that, according to one of my grandmothers, originated in the Hard Times—the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. My mother's grape-hull pies were unusually delectable; she used fox grapes and scuppernong grapes in them, and she used the seeded pulps of the grapes as well as the hulls. In the fall, when the coarse, spongy outer hulls of the black walnuts started turning from green to yellow to black, I would take a bushel bag to the branch every afternoon for a week or so and fill it half to three-quarters full of walnuts (with the hulls still on, they could be quite heavy) and tie a rope to the bag and drag it home and spread the walnuts out on the dirt floor of the cellar to dry. And after the first frost I would go to certain wild-persimmon trees on the hill of the branch whose fruit I knew from experience and pick a bucket of persimmons and my mother would mash them through a colander and mix them with milk and butter and cornmeal and honey and nutmeg and make a pudding out of them, baked persimmon pudding,

which was another delectable old country-Southern dessert.

Every so often, I would go into the branch looking for one thing and come out of it with something else entirely. On the farther side of the branch, running along the margin of my father's land, there was a sandy field grown up in broomstraw that sometime in the distant past had been the site of an Indian village or maybe of a long succession of Indian villages. After big rains, it was often possible to pick up Indian relics in this field, particularly in and around gullies and washouts: fragments of pottery mostly, and now and then a stone weapon or tool—an arrowhead or a spearhead or a hide-scaper or a drill or a chopper or a digging stone or a hammerstone or a kind of stone that I once figured out to my own satisfaction by experimentation but perhaps quite wrongly had been a nut-cracking stone (it had socketlike depressions in it in which nuts such as black walnuts could be fitted and held in place while being cracked), and once in a while an object that was completely enigmatic. One fall morning when I was thirteen or fourteen, a Saturday morning in September, I got up early and went into the kitchen and told my mother, who had also gotten up early, that I wanted to spend the day in the Indian field. There had been thunder and lightning during the night and a wild, pouring-down rain—a kind of rain that people around home call a stump-mover. My mother made breakfast for me and made me a couple of sandwiches to put in my pocket, and I left the house just as the sun was coming up. I crossed the branch and entered the Indian field and spent an hour or two

systematically searching the gullies, but without any luck. Near one end of the Indian field, Pittman Mill Branch is joined by a tributary branch called the South Fork. The South Fork is full of rattlesnakes and full of big bullbrier vines, and my father had warned me to stay out of it and I always had, but this day I disregarded his warning and, ducking and dodging to avoid the bullbriers, I followed a gully that looked promising. [The manuscript ends here.] ♦



# THE QUIET GERMAN

*The astonishing rise of Angela Merkel, the most powerful woman in the world.*

BY GEORGE PACKER

**A** summer afternoon at the Reichstag. Soft Berlin light filters down through the great glass dome, past tourists ascending the spiral ramp, and into the main hall of parliament. Half the members' seats are empty. At the lectern, a short, slightly hunched figure in a fuchsia jacket, black slacks, and a helmet of no-color hair is reading a speech from a binder. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and the world's most powerful woman, is making every effort not to be interesting.

"As the federal government, we have been carrying out a threefold policy since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis," Merkel says, staring at the binder. Her delivery is toneless, as if she were trying to induce her audience into shifting its attention elsewhere. "Besides the first part of this triad, targeted support for Ukraine, is, second, the unceasing effort to find a diplomatic solution for the crisis in the dialogue with Russia." For years, public speaking was visibly painful to Merkel, her hands a particular source of trouble; eventually, she learned to bring her fingertips together in a diamond shape over her stomach.

The Reichstag was constructed under Kaiser Wilhelm I and Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, in the eighteen-eighties, when a newly unified Germany was making its first rise to preeminence in Europe. Two days before the end of the First World War, with a Bolshevik revolution spreading across the country, a social-democratic politician interrupted his lunch inside the Reichstag, stood at a second-floor balcony, and declared the end of imperial Germany: "Long live the German republic!" The Reichstag was the turbulent seat of parliament through the Weimar era and into the start of Nazi rule, until, on the night of February 27, 1933, a suspicious fire broke out in the

session chamber and nearly gutted the building. Germany's new Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, rushed to the scene with his aide Joseph Goebbels and blamed the fire on the Communists, using the crisis to suspend civil liberties, crush the opposition, and consolidate all power into the Nazi Party. Parliament voted to render itself meaningless, and the Nazis never repaired the damaged building. At the end of the Second World War, the Soviets saw the Reichstag as the symbol of the Third Reich and made it a top target in the Battle for Berlin, laying heavy siege. A photograph of a Red Army soldier raising a Soviet flag amid the neoclassical statuary on the roof became the iconic image of German defeat.

During the Cold War, the Reichstag—its cupola wrecked, its walls bullet-pocked—was an abandoned relic in the no man's land of central Berlin, just inside the British sector. The Wall, built in 1961, ran a few steps from the back of the building. A minimal renovation in the sixties kept out the elements, but the Reichstag was generally shunned until the Wall came down, in 1989. Then, at midnight on October 3, 1990, President Richard von Weizsäcker stood outside the Reichstag and announced to a crowd of a million people the reunification of Germany, in freedom and peace. Berlin became its capital.

For the next decade, until the Bundestag began convening there officially, the Reichstag was reconstructed in an earnestly debated, self-consciously symbolic manner that said as much about reunified Germany as its ruin had said about the totalitarian years. The magnificent dome, designed by Norman Foster, suggested transparency and openness. The famous words on the colonnaded entrance, "DEM DEUTSCHEN VOLKE" ("To the German People")—fabricated



AGENTUR FOCUS/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES

*Herlinde Koelbl has been photographing Merkel since 1991. Koelbl says that Merkel has always been "a bit awkward," but "you could feel her strength at the beginning."*



out of melted-down French cannons from the Napoleonic Wars and affixed during the First World War—were preserved out of a sense of fidelity to history. But, after parliamentary argument, a German-American artist was commissioned to create a courtyard garden in which the more modest phrase “DER BEVÖLKERUNG”—“To the Populace,” without the nationalistic tone of the older motto—was laid out in white letters amid unruly plantings. During the Reichstag’s reconstruction, workers uncovered graffiti, in Cyrillic script, scrawled by Red Army soldiers on second-floor walls. After another debate, some of these were kept on display as historical reminders: soldiers’ names, “Moscow to Berlin 9/5/45,” even “I fuck Hitler in the ass.”

No other country memorializes its conquerors on the walls of its most important official building. Germany’s crimes were unique, and so is its way of reckoning with the history contained in the Reichstag. By integrating the slogans of victorious Russian soldiers into its parliament building, Germany shows that it has learned essential lessons from its past (ones that the Russians themselves missed). By confronting the twentieth century head on, Germans embrace a narrative of liberating themselves from the worst of their history. In Berlin, reminders are all around you. Get on the U-Bahn at Stadtmitte, between the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the Topography of Terror Gestapo museum, and glance up at the train’s video news ticker: “80 years ago today PEN Club-Berlin forced into exile.” Like a dedicated analyst, Germany has brought its past to the surface, endlessly discussed it, and accepted it, and this work of many years has freed the patient to lead a successful new life.

At the lectern, Merkel continues addressing parliament, recounting a meeting, in Brussels, of the Group of Seven, which has just expelled its eighth member, Russia, over the war in Ukraine. “We will be very persistent when it comes to enforcing freedom, justice, and self-determination on the European continent,” she says. “Our task is to protect Ukraine on its self-determined way, and to meet old-fashioned thinking about spheres of influence from the nineteenth and twentieth century with answers from

the global twenty-first century.” Merkel has reached her rhetorical high point—signalled by a slowing of her monotone and a subtle hand gesture, fingers extended. To the non-German speaker, she could be reading out regulatory guidelines for the national rail system.

The Chancellor finishes to sustained applause and takes a seat behind the lectern, among her cabinet ministers. Merkel has lost weight—bedridden last winter after fracturing her pelvis in a cross-country-skiing accident, she gave up sausage sandwiches for chopped carrots and took off twenty pounds—and her slimmer face, with its sunken eyes and longer jowls, betrays her fatigue. She’s been Chancellor since 2005, having won a third term last September, with no challenger in sight.

After the Chancellor, it’s the turn of the opposition to speak—such as it is. The ruling coalition of Merkel’s Christians Democrats and the Social Democrats has eighty per cent of the seats in the Bundestag. The Greens, who did poorly in last year’s election, have had trouble distinguishing their agenda from Merkel’s, and often lend her support. On this day, the role of opposition is left to Die Linke, the leftist party of mostly former East German politicians, which has just ten per cent of parliament. Sahra Wagenknecht, an orthodox Marxist in a brilliant-red suit, steps behind the lectern and berates Merkel for her economic and foreign policies, which, she says, are bringing Fascism back to Europe. “We must stop abusing a highly dangerous, half-hegemonic position that Germany slid into, in the ruthless old German style,” Wagenknecht declares. She then cites the French historian Emmanuel Todd: “Unknowingly, the Germans are on their way to again take their role as bringers of calamity for the other European peoples, and later for themselves.”

Merkel ignores her. She’s laughing about something with her economics minister, Sigmar Gabriel, and her foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, both Social Democrats. While Wagenknecht accuses the government of supporting Fascists in Kiev, Merkel gets up to chat with her ministers in the back row. She returns to her seat and rummages in an orange-red leather handbag that clashes with her jacket. When she glances up

at Wagenknecht, it’s with a mixture of boredom and contempt.

The speaker ends her jeremiad, and the only people to clap are the members of Die Linke, isolated in the far-left section of the chamber. One by one, Social Democratic and Green parliamentarians come forward to defend Merkel. “How can you connect us Germans to Fascists?” Katrin Göring-Eckardt, a Green leader, asks, to applause. Another woman from Die Linke throws a quote of Bertolt Brecht at Göring-Eckardt: “Who does not know the truth is simply a fool, yet who knows the truth and calls it a lie is a criminal.” Göring-Eckardt is outraged. The vice-president of the Bundestag orders the woman from Die Linke to observe protocol. Merkel keeps ignoring the exchange, at one point turning her back, at another leaving the hall. Later, German news accounts will speak of high drama in the normally drowsy Bundestag, but Merkel’s body language tells the story: the drama has been provided by an insignificant minority. Chancellor Merkel has the parliament under control.

The historian Fritz Stern calls the era of reunification “Germany’s second chance”—a fresh opportunity to be Europe’s preëminent power, after the catastrophic period of aggression that began a century ago. Merkel seems perfectly matched to the demands of this second chance. In a country where passionate rhetoric and macho strutting led to ruin, her analytical detachment and lack of apparent ego are political strengths. On a continent where the fear of Germany is hardly dead, Merkel’s air of ordinariness makes a resurgent Germany seem less threatening. “Merkel has a character that suggests she’s one of us,” Göring-Eckardt told me. Germans call the Chancellor Mutti, or Mommy. The nickname was first applied by Merkel’s rivals in the Christian Democratic Union as an insult, and she didn’t like it, but after Mutti caught on with the public Merkel embraced it.

While most of Europe stagnates, Germany is an economic juggernaut, with low unemployment and a resilient manufacturing base. The ongoing monetary crisis of the euro zone has turned Germany, Europe’s largest creditor nation, into a regional superpower—one of Merkel’s biographers calls her “the

Chancellor of Europe." While America slides into ever-deeper inequality, Germany retains its middle class and a high level of social solidarity. Angry young protesters fill the public squares of countries around the world, but German crowds gather for outdoor concerts and beery World Cup celebrations. Now almost pacifist after its history of militarism, Germany has stayed out of most of the recent wars that have proved punishing and inconclusive for other Western countries. The latest E.U. elections, in May, saw parties on the far left and the far right grow more popular around the Continent, except in Germany, where the winners were the centrists whose bland faces—evoking economics professors and H.R. managers—smiled on campaign posters, none more ubiquitous than that of Merkel, who wasn't even on the ballot. American politics is so polarized that Congress has virtually stopped functioning; the consensus in Germany is so stable that new laws pour forth from parliament while meaningful debate has almost disappeared.

"The German self-criticism and self-loathing are part of the success story—getting strong by hating yourself," Mariam Lau, a political correspondent for the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, told me. "And Merkel had to reeducate herself, too. She's part of the self-reeducation of Germany."

Among German leaders, Merkel is a triple anomaly: a woman (divorced, remarried, no children), a scientist (quantum chemistry), and an Ossi (a product of East Germany). These qualities, though making her an outsider in German politics, also helped to propel her extraordinary rise. Yet some observers, attempting to explain her success, look everywhere but to Merkel herself. "There are some who say what should not be can't really exist—that a woman from East Germany, who doesn't have the typical qualities a politician should have, shouldn't be in this position," Göring-Eckardt, another woman from East Germany, said. "They don't want to say she's just a very good politician." Throughout her career, Merkel has made older and more powerful politicians, almost all of them men, pay a high price for underestimating her.

Merkel was born in Hamburg, West



*"We're finding that the ones we tested perfume and makeup on are extremely attractive to me."*

Germany, in 1954. Her father, Horst Kasner, was an official in the Lutheran Church, one of the few institutions that continued operating in both Germanys after the postwar division of the country. Serious and demanding, he moved the family across the frontier just a few weeks after Angela's birth—and against his wife's wishes—to take up ecclesiastical duties in the German Democratic Republic. That year, almost two hundred thousand East Germans fled in the other direction. Kasner's unusual decision led West German Church officials to call him "the red minister." Joachim Gauck, a former East German pastor and dissident, who, in 2012, was elected Germany's largely ceremonial President, once told a colleague that people in the Lutheran Church under Communism knew to stay away from Kasner, a member of the state-controlled Federation of Evangelical Pastors. By most accounts, Kasner's motives were as much careerist as ideological.

Angela, the oldest of three children, was raised on the outskirts of Templin, a cobblestoned town in the pine forests of Brandenburg, north of Berlin. The Kasners lived in the seminary at Waldhof, a

complex of around thirty buildings, many from the nineteenth century, belonging to the Lutheran Church. Waldhof was—and remains—home to several hundred physically and mentally disabled people, who learned trades and grew crops. Ulrich Schoeneich, who managed the estate in the eighties and knew the Kasners, described Waldhof under the East Germans as a grim place, with up to sixty men crammed into a single room, and no furniture except cots. Merkel once recalled seeing some residents strapped to benches, but she also said, "To grow up in the neighborhood of handicapped people was an important experience for me. I learned back then to treat them in a very normal way."

Merkel's upbringing in a Communist state was as normal as she could make it. "I never felt that the G.D.R. was my home country," she told the German photographer Herlinde Koelbl, in 1991. "I have a relatively sunny spirit, and I always had the expectation that my path through life would be relatively sunny, no matter what happened. I have never allowed myself to be bitter. I always used the free room that the G.D.R. allowed me. . . . There was no shadow over my

childhood. And later I acted in such a way that I would not have to live in constant conflict with the state." During her first campaign for Chancellor, in 2005, she described her calculations more bluntly: "I decided that if the system became too terrible, I would have to try to escape. But if it wasn't too bad then I wouldn't lead my life in opposition to the system, because I was scared of the damage that would do to me."

Being the daughter of a Protestant minister from the West carried both privileges and liabilities. The Kasners had two cars: the standard East German Trabant, an underpowered little box that has become the subject of kitschy *Ostalgia*, and a more luxurious Wartburg, their official church car. The family received clothes and food from relatives in Hamburg, as well as money in the form of "Forum checks," convertible from Deutsche marks and valid in shops in large East Berlin hotels that sold Western consumer items. "They were élite," Erika Benn, Merkel's Russian teacher in Templin, said. But the Church retained enough independence from the state that the Kasners lived under constant suspicion, and during Angela's childhood religious organizations came to be seen as agents of Western intelligence. In 1994, an official report on repression in East

Germany concluded, "The country of Martin Luther was de-Christianized by the end of the G.D.R."

Angela's mother, Herlind, suffered the most in the family. An English teacher who imparted her passion for learning to Angela, Herlind wrote to the education authorities every year asking for a job, and every year she was told that nothing was available, even though English teachers were in desperately short supply. "She always felt oppressed by her husband," Schoeneich, the Waldhof manager, told me.

Angela was physically clumsy—she later called herself "a little movement idiot." At the age of five, she could barely walk downhill without falling. "What a normal person knows automatically I had to first figure out mentally, followed by exhausting exercise," she has said. According to Benn, as a teen-ager Merkel was never "bitchy" or flirtatious; she was uninterested in clothes, "always colorless," and "her haircut was impossible—it looked like a pot over her head." A former schoolmate once labelled her a member of the Club of the Unkissed. (The schoolmate, who became Templin's police chief, nearly lost his job when the comment was published.) But Merkel was a brilliant, ferociously motivated student. A longtime political associate of

Merkel's traces her drive to those early years in Templin. "She decided, 'O.K., you don't fuck me? I will fuck you with my weapons,'" the political associate told me. "And those weapons were intelligence and will and power."

When Angela was in the eighth grade, Benn recruited her for the Russian Club and coached her to compete in East Germany's Russian-language Olympiad. During skits that the students practiced in the teacher's tiny parlor, Benn had to exhort her star student to look up and smile while offering another student a glass of water in Russian: "Can't you be a *little* more friendly?" Merkel won at every level, from schoolwide to countrywide, a feat that she managed three times, to the glory of Frau Benn, a Party member with small-town ambitions. In her tidy apartment in Templin, Benn, who is seventy-six, proudly showed me a victory certificate from 1969. "I have the Lenin bust in the cellar," she said. Not long before Horst Kasner died, in 2011, he sent a newspaper clipping to a colleague of Benn's, with a picture of Merkel standing next to Russia's President, Vladimir Putin. To Benn's delight, Putin was quoted expressing his admiration for the first world leader with whom he could converse in his mother tongue.

In 1970, an incident exposed the fragile standing of the *bürgerlich* Kasner family. At a local Party meeting, the Russian Club's latest triumph was announced, and Benn expected praise. Instead, the schools supervisor observed acidly, "When the children of farmers and workers win, *that* will be something." Benn burst into tears.

Merkel studied physics at Leipzig University and earned a doctorate in quantum chemistry in Berlin. She was allowed to pursue graduate studies, in no small part because she never ran afoul of the ruling party. Ulrich Schoeneich, who became Templin's mayor after reunification, expressed bitterness to me that Merkel hasn't been challenged much on her accommodation with the East German system. Schoeneich's father, Harro, was also a Protestant minister, but, unlike Kasner, he openly dissented from the state. Ulrich Schoeneich refused to join the Free German Youth, the blue-shirted "fighting reserve" of the ruling party which the vast majority of East German teen-agers joined, including



*"All right, buddy, that'll be a ten-dollar corkage fee."*

Angela Kasner, who participated well into adulthood. “Not just as a dead person in the files but as the officer responsible for agitation and propaganda,” Schoeneich told me, referring to a revelation in a controversial recent biography, “The First Life of Angela M.” He added, “I’m convinced that she could get her doctorate only because she was active in the Free German Youth, even in her postgraduate days. Most people say it was forced, but I demonstrated that you didn’t have to join it.” Merkel herself once admitted that her participation in the Free German Youth was “seventy per cent opportunism.”

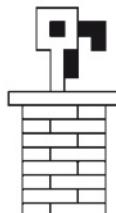
Schoeneich wasn’t permitted to finish high school, and he spent much of his early life in the shadow cast by his family’s principled opposition. Angela Kasner had other ideas for her future, and became, at most, a passive opponent of the regime. Evelyn Roll, one of Merkel’s biographers, discovered a Stasi document, dated 1984, that was based on information provided by a friend of Merkel’s. It described Merkel as “very critical toward our state,” and went on, “Since its foundation, she was thrilled by the demands and actions of Solidarity in Poland. Although Angela views the leading role of the Soviet Union as that of a dictatorship which all other socialist countries obey, she is fascinated by the Russian language and the culture of the Soviet Union.”

Rainer Eppelmann, a courageous dissident clergyman under Communism, who got to know Merkel soon after the fall of the Wall, refuses to criticize her. “I don’t judge the ninety-five per cent,” he told me. “Most of them were whisperers. They never said what they thought, what they felt, what they were afraid of. Even today, we’re not completely aware what this did to people.” He added, “In order to be true to your hopes, your ambitions, your beliefs, your dreams, you had to be a hero twenty-four hours a day. And nobody can do this.”

After 1989, when the chance came to participate in democratic politics, these same qualities became useful to Merkel, in a new way. Eppelmann explained, “The whisperer might find it easier to learn in this new life, to wait and see, and not just burst out at once—to think things over before speaking. The whisperer thinks, How can I say this without damaging myself? The whisperer is

somebody who might be compared to a chess player. And I have the impression that she thinks things over more carefully and is always a few moves ahead of her competitor.”

In 1977, at twenty-three, Angela married a physicist, Ulrich Merkel, but the union foundered quickly, and she left him in 1981. She spent the final moribund decade of the G.D.R. as a quantum



chemist at the East German Academy of Sciences, a gloomy research facility, across from a Stasi barracks, in southeastern Berlin. She co-authored a paper titled “Vibrational Properties of Surface Hydroxyls: Nonempirical Model Calculations Including Anharmonicities.” She was the only woman in the theoretical-chemistry section—a keen observer of others, intensely curious about the world.

People who have followed her career point to Merkel’s scientific habit of mind as a key to her political success. “She is about the best analyst of any given situation that I could imagine,” a senior official in her government said. “She looks at various vectors, extrapolates, and says, ‘This is where I think it’s going.’” Trained to see the invisible world in terms of particles and waves, Merkel learned to approach problems methodically, drawing comparisons, running scenarios, weighing risks, anticipating reactions, and then, even after making a decision, letting it sit for a while before acting. She once told a story from her childhood of standing on a diving board for the full hour of a swimming lesson until, at the bell, she finally jumped.

Scientific detachment and caution under dictatorship can be complementary traits, and in Merkel’s case they were joined by the reticence, tinged with irony, of a woman navigating a man’s world. She once joked to the tabloid *Bild Zeitung*, with double-edged self-deprecation, “The men in the laboratory always had their hands on all the buttons at the

same time. I couldn’t keep up with this, because I was thinking. And then things suddenly went ‘poof,’ and the equipment was destroyed.” Throughout her career, Merkel has made a virtue of biding her time and keeping her mouth shut.

“She’s not a woman of strong emotions,” Bernd Ulrich, the deputy editor of *Die Zeit*, said. “Too much emotion disturbs your reason. She watches politics like a scientist.” He called her “a learning machine.” Volker Schlöndorff, the director of “The Tin Drum” and other films, got to know Merkel in the years just after reunification. “Before you contradict her, you would think twice—she has the authority of somebody who knows that she’s right,” he said. “Once she has an opinion, it seems to be founded, whereas I tend to have opinions that I have to revise frequently.”

Every morning, Merkel took the S-Bahn to the Academy of Sciences from her apartment in Prenzlauer Berg, a bohemian neighborhood near the city center. For several stretches, her train ran parallel to the Wall, the rooftops of West Berlin almost in reach. Sometimes she commuted with a colleague, Michael Schindhelm. “You were confronted every day, from the morning on, with the absurdity of this city,” he told me. Schindhelm found Merkel to be the most serious researcher in the theoretical-chemistry section, frustrated by her lack of access to Western publications and scientists. Whenever her colleagues left the building to cheer the motorcade of a high-profile guest from the Communist world on its way from Schönefeld Airport, she stayed behind. “She really wanted to achieve something,” Schindhelm said. “Others just liked sitting in that comfortable niche while the country went down the drain.”

In 1984, Schindhelm and Merkel began sharing an office and, over Turkish coffee that she made, became close. They both had a fairly critical view of the East German state. Schindhelm had spent five years studying in the Soviet Union, and when news of Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika policy seeped into East Germany, through West German television, Merkel questioned him about the potential for fundamental change. They both felt that the world on the other side of the Wall was more desirable than their own. (Years later, Schindhelm, who

became a theatre and opera director, was revealed to have been coerced by the Stasi into serving as an informer, though he apparently never betrayed anyone.)

One day in 1985, Merkel showed up at the office with the text of a speech by the West German President, Richard von Weizsäcker, given on the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Weizsäcker spoke with unprecedented honesty about Germany's responsibility for the Holocaust and declared the country's defeat a day of liberation. He expressed a belief that Germans, in facing their past, could redefine their identity and future. In the West, the speech became a landmark on the country's return to civilization. But in East Germany, where ideology had twisted the history of the Third Reich beyond recognition, the speech was virtually unknown. Merkel had procured a rare copy through her connections in the Church, and she was deeply struck by it.

Being an East German meant retaining faith in the idea of Germany even though many West Germans, who needed it less, had given up on reunification. As East Germany decayed, its citizens had nothing else to hold on to, whereas Westerners had been taught to suppress feelings of nationhood. "People were really lacking identity—there was an enormous vacuum to making sense of your existence," Schindhelm said. Merkel's excitement about the speech showed that "she had a very particular passion for Germany as a country, its history and culture."

The next year, Merkel was granted permission to travel to Hamburg for a cousin's wedding. After riding the miraculously comfortable trains through West Germany, she returned to East Berlin convinced that the socialist system was doomed. "She came back very impressed, but she came back," Schindhelm said. "She stayed not out of loyalty to the state but because she had her network there, her family." Merkel, in her early thirties, was looking forward to 2014—when she would turn sixty, collect her state pension, and be allowed to travel to California.

Merkel's second life began on the night of November 9, 1989. Instead of joining the delirious throngs pouring through the Wall, which had just been opened, she took her regular

Thursday-evening sauna with a friend. Later, she crossed into the West with a crowd at the Bornholmer Strasse checkpoint, but instead of continuing with other Ossis to the upscale shopping district of Kurfürstendamm she returned home, in order to get up for work in the morning. Her actions on that momentous night have been ridiculed as a sign of banality and a lack of feeling. But, in the following months, no East German seized the new freedoms with more fervor than Merkel. Few irreducible principles have been evident in her political career, but one of them is the right to the pursuit of happiness. "There aren't many feelings that she's really into, but liberty and freedom are very important," Göring-Eckardt, the Green leader, said. "And this is, of course, linked to the experience of growing up in a society where newspapers were censored, books were banned, travel was forbidden."

A month after the Wall fell, Merkel visited the offices of a new political group called Democratic Awakening, which were near her apartment. "Can I help you?" she asked. She was soon put to work setting up the office computers, which had been donated by the West German government. She kept coming back, though at first hardly anyone noticed her. It was the kind of fluid moment when things happen quickly and chance and circumstance can make all the difference. In March, 1990, the leader of Democratic Awakening, Wolfgang Schnur, was exposed as a Stasi informer, and at an emergency board meeting Rainer Eppelmann, the dissident clergyman, was chosen to replace him. Merkel was asked to handle the noisy crowd of journalists outside the door, and she did it with such calm assurance that, after the East German elections that March, Eppelmann suggested Merkel as a spokesman for the country's first and last democratically elected Prime Minister, Lothar de Maizière.

"She was *fleissig*—the opposite of lazy," Eppelmann recalled. "She never put herself in the foreground. She understood that she had to do a job here and do it well, but not to be the chief. Lothar de Maizière was the chief." De Maizière already had a spokesman, so Merkel became the deputy. "The No. 1 press speaker showed off while she did all the work," Eppelmann said. In this way,

she earned de Maizière's trust, and he brought her with him on visits to foreign capitals. He once described Merkel as looking like "a typical G.D.R. scientist," wearing "a baggy skirt and Jesus sandals and a cropped haircut." After one foreign trip, he asked his office manager to take her clothes shopping.

In the early nineties, Volker Schlöndorff began attending monthly dinners with a small group that included Merkel and her partner, Joachim Sauer, another scientist. (They married in 1998.) Some participants were from the East, others from the West; at each meal, the host would narrate his or her upbringing, illuminating what life was like on one side of the divide. Schlöndorff found Merkel to be an earnest but witty conversation partner. One evening, at the extremely modest country house that Merkel and Sauer had built, near Templin, she and Schlöndorff went for a walk through the fields. "We spoke about Germany, what it is going to become," Schlöndorff recalled. "I was trying irony and sarcasm, which didn't take with her at all. It was as if she were saying, 'Come on, be serious, matters not to be joked about.'"

Merkel's decision to enter politics is the central mystery of an opaque life. She rarely speaks publicly about herself and has never explained her decision. It wasn't a long-term career plan—like most Germans, she didn't foresee the abrupt collapse of Communism and the opportunities it created. But when the moment came, and Merkel found herself single and childless in her mid-thirties—and laboring in an East German institution with no future—a woman of her ambition must have grasped that politics would be the most dynamic realm of the new Germany. And, as Schlöndorff dryly put it, "With a certain hesitation, she seized the day."

Reunification really meant annexation of the East by the West, which required giving East Germans top government positions. Merkel's gender and youth made her an especially appealing option. In October, 1990, she won a seat in the new Bundestag, in Bonn, the first capital of reunified Germany. She got herself introduced to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and de Maizière suggested that Kohl bring her into his cabinet. To Merkel's surprise, she was named minister of women and youth—a job, she

admitted to a journalist, in which she had no interest. She wasn't a feminist politician, nor was economic parity for the former East her cause. She had no political agenda at all. According to Karl Feldmeyer, the political correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, what drove Merkel was "her perfect instinct for power, which, for me, is the main characteristic of this politician."

Kohl, then at his height as a statesman, presented Merkel to foreign dignitaries as a curiosity, belittling her by calling her "*mein Mädchen*"—his girl. She had to be taught how to use a credit card. Cabinet meetings were dominated by Kohl, and though Merkel was always well prepared, she seldom spoke. But inside her ministry Merkel was respected for her efficient absorption of information, and feared for her directness and temper. According to her biographer Evelyn Roll, she acquired the nickname Angie the Snake, and a reputation for accepting little criticism. When, in 1994, Merkel was given the environment portfolio, she quickly fired the ministry's top civil servant after he suggested that she would need his help running things.

In 1991, Herlinde Koelbl, the photographer, began taking pictures of Merkel and other German politicians for a study called "Traces of Power." Her idea was to see how life in the public eye changed them in the course of a decade. Most of the men, such as Gerhard Schröder, a Social Democrat who became Chancellor in 1998, and Joschka Fischer, who became his foreign minister, seemed to swell with self-importance. Merkel remained herself, Koelbl told me: "in her body language, a bit awkward." But, she added, "You could feel her strength at the beginning." In the first portrait, she has her chin slightly lowered and looks up at the camera—not exactly shy, but watchful. Subsequent pictures display growing confidence. During the sessions, Merkel was always in a hurry, never making small talk. "Schröder and Fischer, they are vain," Koelbl said. "Merkel is not vain—still. And that helped her, because if you're vain you are subjective. If you're not vain, you are more objective."

Democratic politics was a West German game, and Merkel had to learn how to play it in the methodical way that she had learned how to command her body

as a "little movement idiot" of five. She became such an assiduous student that some colleagues from the former East found it unsettling. Petra Pau, a senior member of the Bundestag from Die Linke, once caught Merkel saying "we West Germans." But what made Merkel a potentially transformative figure in German politics was that, below the surface, she *didn't* belong. She joined the Christian Democratic Union after Democratic Awakening merged with it, ahead of the 1990 elections; the C.D.U. was more hospitable than the Social Democrats were to liberal-minded East Germans. But the C.D.U. was also a stodgy patriarchy whose base was in the Catholic south. "She never became mentally a part of the C.D.U., until now," Feldmeyer, of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, said. "She is strange to everything in the Party. It is only a function of her power, nothing else."

Alan Posener, of the conservative newspaper *Die Welt*, told me, "The things that motivate the heartland of the C.D.U. don't mean a thing to her"—concerns about "working mothers, gay marriage, immigration, divorce." The same was true of the transatlantic alliance with America, the cornerstone of West German security: Posener said that she studied its details in "the C.D.U. manual." Michael Naumann, a book publisher and journalist who served as culture minister under Schröder, said, "Her attitude to-

ward the United States is a *learned* attitude." Dirk Kurbjuweit, a biographer of Merkel and a correspondent for *Der Spiegel*, said, "Merkel really is a friend of freedom, because she suffered under not being free in the G.D.R. But in the other way she's a learned democrat—not a born democrat, like Americans."

West German politicians of Merkel's generation were shaped by the culture wars that followed the upheavals of 1968, which didn't touch her at all. Over dinner one night in the mid-nineties, Merkel asked Schlöndorff, a former radical, to explain the violence perpetrated by the Baader-Meinhof Group. He told her that young people had needed to break with the authoritarian culture that had never been repudiated in West Germany after the defeat of the Nazis. The more he explained, the less Merkel seemed to sympathize—she wasn't against authority, just the East German kind. What did kids in the West have to protest about? She didn't always hide a feeling that West Germans were like spoiled children.

For all the catching up Merkel had to do in her political education, being East German gave her advantages: she had learned self-discipline, strength of will, and silence as essential tools. Feldmeyer said, "The G.D.R. shaped her in such an extreme and strong way as no one who grew up in the Federal Republic can imagine. Everything was a question of



*"You know how some writers are known as 'writer's writers'? I'm what's known as a 'driving instructor.'"*

survival, and it was impossible to make errors if you wanted to succeed."

Early in her career, Merkel hired a young C.D.U. worker named Beate Baumann to run her office. Baumann, who remains her most influential adviser, was the perfect No. 2—loyal, discreet to the vanishing point, and, according to some insiders, the only aide who addressed the boss with complete candor. "Baumann could not be a politician, and Merkel didn't know the West," Bernd Ulrich, of *Die Zeit*, who knows both women well, told me. "So Baumann was her interpreter for everything that was typically West German." Fed up with Kohl's smug bullying, the two women practiced a form of "invisible cruelty": they played hardball but relished their victories privately, without celebrating in public and making unnecessary enemies. Their style, Ulrich said, is "not 'House of Cards.'" On one rare occasion, Merkel bared her teeth. In 1996, during negotiations over a nuclear-waste law, Gerhard Schröder, two years away from becoming Chancellor, called her performance as environment minister "pitiful." In her interview with Herlinde Koelbl that year, Merkel said, "I will put him in the corner, just like he did with me. I still need time, but one day the time will come for this, and I am already looking forward." It took nine years for her to make good on the promise.

In 1998, amid a recession, Schröder defeated Kohl and became Chancellor. The next summer, Volker Schlöndorff, at a garden party outside his home, in Potsdam, introduced Merkel to a movie producer, half-jokingly calling her "Germany's first female Chancellor." Merkel shot Schlöndorff a look, as if he had called her bluff—*How dare you?*—which convinced him that she actually wanted the job. The producer, a C.D.U. member, was incredulous. Schlöndorff said, "These guys whose party had been in power forever could not imagine that a woman could be Chancellor—and from East Germany, no less."

In November, 1999, the C.D.U. was engulfed by a campaign-finance scandal, with charges of undisclosed cash donations and secret bank accounts. Kohl and his successor as Party chairman, Wolfgang Schäuble, were both implicated, but

## THE WIDE STARS ABOVE OUR SKY

Class was called The Wide Stars Above Our Sky.  
Charles and I enrolled while Shira planned  
her summer abroad helping those in need.  
Across the kitchen table she unfurled  
a map, flattening it down with her palm,  
then pointed to a small country near Russia.

Shira said, "Let's check out that hot Peruvian-Asian restaurant downtown." I declined, deciding to eat dinner with my parents instead. Chai, the puppy, was eight weeks old. I plowed through snow to purchase a knee joint at Kriser's so she would stop chewing the chairs and table.

Shira didn't think she'd meet the right man  
in the tiny country adjoining Russia.  
My graduate-school poetry professor

Kohl was so revered that nobody in the Party dared to criticize him. Merkel, who had risen to secretary-general after the C.D.U.'s electoral defeat, saw opportunity. She telephoned Karl Feldmeyer. "I would like to give some comments to you in your newspaper," she said.

"Do you know what you want to say?" Feldmeyer asked.

"I've written it down."

Feldmeyer suggested that, instead of doing an interview, she publish an opinion piece. Five minutes later, a fax came through, and Feldmeyer read it with astonishment. Merkel, a relatively new figure in the C.D.U., was calling for the Party to break with its longtime leader. "The Party must learn to walk now and dare to engage in future battles with its political opponents without its old warhorse, as Kohl has often enjoyed calling himself," Merkel wrote. "We who now have responsibility for the Party, and not so much Helmut Kohl, will decide how to approach the new era." She published the piece without warning the tainted Schäuble, the Party chairman. In a gesture that mixed Protestant righteousness with ruthlessness, Kohl's *Mädchen* was cutting herself off from her political father and gambling her career in a naked bid to supplant him. She succeeded. Within a few months, Merkel had been elected Party chairman. Kohl receded into history. "She put the knife in his back—and turned it twice," Feldmeyer

said. That was the moment when many Germans first became aware of Angela Merkel.

Years later, Michael Naumann sat next to Kohl at a dinner, and asked him, "Herr Kohl, what exactly does she want?"

"Power," Kohl said, tersely. He told another friend that championing young Merkel had been the biggest mistake of his life. "I brought my killer," Kohl said. "I put the snake on my arm."

In 2002, Merkel found herself on the verge of losing a Party vote that would determine the C.D.U.'s candidate for Chancellor in elections that fall. She hastily arranged a breakfast with her rival, the Bavarian leader Edmund Stoiber, in his home town. Disciplined enough to control her own ambitions, Merkel told Stoiber that she was withdrawing in his favor. Schlöndorff sent her a note saying, in effect, "Smart move." By averting a loss that would have damaged her future within the Party, Merkel ended up in a stronger position. Stoiber lost to Schröder, and Merkel went on to outmaneuver a series of male heavyweights from the West, waiting for them to make a mistake or eat one another up, before getting rid of each with a little shove.

John Kornblum, a former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, who still lives in Berlin, said, "If you cross her, you end up dead. There's nothing cushy about her. There's a whole list of alpha males who thought they would get her out of the

offered the workshop every twenty minutes. Black ice slicked down back alleys, intersections. Monuments of snow barricaded sidewalks.

Charles transformed into my college boyfriend. As we climbed into the blue Subaru I forgot to explain that I already was married. We drove miles until we reached the summer college. My professor turned into a high-school friend, now TV host, who ambled

around the corner of the red brick building, counting the cumulus clouds overhead. He wore only a blue terry-cloth bathrobe. I asked, "Will The Wide Stars Above Our Sky begin on time?" The clock said 4 pm. That was when Shira's plane took flight.

—Elise Paschen

way, and they're all now in other walks of life." On Merkel's fiftieth birthday, in 2004, a conservative politician named Michael Glos published a tribute:

Careful: unpretentiousness can be a weapon! . . . One of the secrets of the success of Angela Merkel is that she knows how to deal with vain men. She knows you shoot a mountain cock best when it's courting a hen. Angela Merkel is a patient hunter of courting mountain cocks. With the patience of an angel, she waits for her moment.

German politics was entering a new era. As the country became more "normal," it no longer needed domineering father figures as leaders. "Merkel was lucky to live in a period when macho was in decline," Ulrich said. "The men didn't notice and she did. She didn't have to fight them—it was an aikido politics." Ulrich added, "If she knows anything, she knows her macho. She has them for her cereal." Merkel's physical haplessness, combined with her emotional opacity, made it hard for her rivals to recognize the threat she posed. "She's very difficult to know, and that is a reason for her success," the longtime political associate said. "It seems she is not from this world. Psychologically, she gives everybody the feeling of 'I will take care of you.'"

When Schröder called early elections in 2005, Merkel became the C.D.U.'s candidate for Chancellor. In the politics of macho, Schröder and Fischer—working-class street fighters who loved political argument and expensive wine, with

seven ex-wives between them—were preëminent. The two men despised Merkel, and the sentiment was reciprocated. According to Dirk Kurbjuweit, of *Der Spiegel*, Schröder and Fischer sometimes laughed "like boys on the playground" when Merkel gave speeches in the Bundestag. In 2001, after photographs were published of Fischer assaulting a policeman as a young militant in the seventies, Merkel denounced him, saying that he would be unfit for public life until he "atoned"—a comment that many Germans found strident. During the 2005 campaign, Fischer said in private talks that Merkel was incapable of doing the job.

At the time, Schröder's Social Democrats ruled in a coalition with the Greens, and the public had grown weary of prolonged economic stagnation. Through most of the campaign, the C.D.U. held a large lead, but the Social Democrats closed the gap, and on Election Night the two parties were virtually tied in the popular vote. Alan Posener, of *Die Welt*, saw Merkel that night at Party headquarters—she seemed deflated, flanked by C.D.U. politicians she had once disposed of, who didn't conceal their glee. Merkel had made two near-fatal mistakes. First, just before the Iraq War—unpopular in Germany, and repudiated by Schröder—she had published an op-ed in the *Washington Post* titled "Schroeder Doesn't Speak for All Ger-

mans," in which she stopped just short of supporting war. "One more sentence for Bush and against Schröder, and she would not be Chancellor today," Ulrich said. Second, many of her advisers were free-market proponents who advocated changes to the tax code and to labor policies which went far beyond what German voters would accept. After fifteen years, she still didn't have a fingertip feel for public opinion.

On Election Night, Merkel, Schröder, Fischer, and other party leaders gathered in a TV studio to discuss the results. Merkel, looking shell-shocked and haggard, was almost mute. Schröder, his hair colored chestnut and combed neatly back, grinned mischievously and effectively declared himself the winner. "I will continue to be Chancellor," he said. "Do you really believe that my party would take up an offer from Merkel to talk when she says she would like to become Chancellor? I think we should leave the church in the village"—that is, quit dreaming. Many viewers thought he was drunk. As Schröder continued to boast, Merkel slowly came to life, as if amused by the Chancellor's performance. She seemed to realize that Schröder's bluster had just saved her the Chancellorship. With a slight smile, she put Schröder in his place. "Plain and simple—you did not win today," she said. Indeed, the C.D.U. had a very slim lead. "With a little time to think about it, even the Social Democrats will come to accept this as a reality. And I promise we will not turn the democratic rules upside down."

Two months later, Merkel was sworn in as Germany's first female Chancellor.

Those who know Merkel say that she is as lively and funny in private as she is publicly soporific—a split in self-presentation that she learned as a young East German. (Through her spokesman, Merkel, who gives few interviews—almost always to German publications, and all anodyne—declined to speak to me.) In off-the-record conversations with German journalists, she replays entire conversations with other world leaders, performing wicked imitations. Among her favorite targets have been Kohl, Putin, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, former Pope Benedict XVI, and Al Gore. ("Ah have to *teach* mah people," she mimics, in a Prussian approximation



*"Yes, but I'll know it's a recliner."*

•      •

of central Tennessee.) After one meeting with Nicolas Sarkozy, the French President, during the euro crisis, she told a group of journalists that Sarkozy's foot had been nervously jiggling the entire time.

Schlöndorff once asked Merkel what she and other leaders discuss during photo ops. The Chancellor described one such moment with Dmitri Medvedev, who briefly interrupted Putin's fifteen-year reign as Russia's President. She and Medvedev were posing for the cameras in Sochi when, gesturing toward the Black Sea, she said, in the Russian she had learned from Frau Benn, "President Putin told me that every morning he swims a thousand metres out there. Do you do things like that?" Medvedev replied, "I swim fifteen hundred metres." To Schlöndorff, the story showed that, "even when she is involved, she is never so totally involved that she could not observe the way people behave and be somehow amused by it."

"She is a master of listening," the longtime political associate said. "In a

conversation, she speaks twenty per cent, you speak eighty per cent. She gives everybody the feeling 'I want to hear what you have to say,' but the truth is that her judgment is made within three minutes, and sometimes she thinks another eighteen minutes are wasted time. She is like a computer—Is this possible, what this man proposes? She's able in a very quick time to realize if it's fantasy."

Nor is she above embarrassing her minions. Once, in a hotel room in Vienna, in the company of Chancellery aides and foreign-ministry officials, Merkel was telling comical stories of camping trips she'd taken as a student. Her aides fell over themselves laughing, until Merkel cut them short: "I've told you this before." The aides insisted that they'd never heard the stories before, but it didn't matter: Madame Chancellor was calling them sycophants. After last year's elections, she met with the Social Democratic leader, Sigmar Gabriel, who is now her economics minister. Gabriel introduced Merkel to one of his aides, saying, "He's been keeping an eye on me for

the past few years. He makes sure I don't do anything stupid in public." Merkel shot back, "And sometimes it's worked."

"Schadenfreude is Merkel's way of having fun," Kurbjuweit said.

Throughout her Chancellorship, Merkel has stayed as close as possible to German public opinion. Posener said that, after nearly losing to Schröder, she told herself, "I'm going to be all things to all people." Critics and supporters alike describe her as a gifted tactician without a larger vision. Kornblum, the former Ambassador, once asked a Merkel adviser about her long-term view. "The Chancellor's long-term view is about two weeks," the adviser replied. The pejorative most often used against her is "opportunist." When I asked Katrin Göring-Eckardt, the Green leader, whether Merkel had any principles, she paused, then said, "She has a strong value of freedom, and everything else is negotiable." (Other Germans added firm support for Israel to the list.)

"People say there's no project, there's no idea," the senior official told me. "It's just a zigzag of smart moves for nine years." But, he added, "She would say that the times are not conducive to great visions." Americans don't like to think of our leaders as having no higher principles. We want at least a suggestion of the "vision thing"—George H. W. Bush's derisive term, for which he was derided. But Germany remains so traumatized by the grand ideologies of its past that a politics of no ideas has a comforting allure.

The most daunting challenge of Merkel's time in office has been the euro-zone crisis, which threatened to bring down economies across southern Europe and jeopardized the integrity of the euro. To Merkel, the crisis confirmed that grand visions can be dangerous. Kohl, who thought in historical terms, had tied Germany to a European currency without a political union that could make it work. "It's now a machine from hell," the senior official said. "She's still trying to repair it."

Merkel's decisions during the crisis reflect the calculations of a politician more mindful of her constituency than of her place in history. When Greek debt was revealed to be at critical levels, she was slow to commit German taxpayers' money to a bailout fund, and in 2011 she blocked a French and American proposal

for coördinated European action. Germany had by far the strongest economy in Europe, with a manufacturing base and robust exports that benefitted from the weakening of the euro. Under Schröder, Germany had instituted reforms in labor and welfare policies that made the country more competitive, and Merkel arrived just in time to reap the benefit. Throughout the crisis, Merkel buried herself in the economic details and refused to get out in front of what German voters—who tended to regard the Greeks as spendthrift and lazy—would accept, even if delaying prolonged the ordeal and, at key moments from late 2011 through the summer of 2012, threatened the euro itself. The novelist and journalist Peter Schneider compared her to a driver in foggy weather: “You only see five metres, not one hundred metres, so it’s better you are very careful, you don’t say too much, you act from step to step. No vision at all.”

Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, who was Germany’s defense minister between 2009 and 2011, said that Merkel took a “Machiavellian” approach to the crisis. She had the stamina to keep her options open as long as possible, and then veiled her decisions behind “the cloud of complexity.” Guttenberg said, “This made it easier for her to change her mind several times rather dramatically, but at the time no one noticed at all.” In the end, under pressure from other European leaders and President Obama, Merkel endorsed a plan for the European Central Bank to prevent Greek sovereign default by buying bonds—much as the Federal Reserve had done during the U.S. financial crisis. In exchange, the countries of southern Europe submitted to strict budget rules and E.U. oversight of their central banks. Merkel realized that she could not allow the euro-zone crisis to capsize the project of European unity. “If the euro falls, then Europe falls,” she declared. The euro was saved, but at the price of ruinous austerity policies and high unemployment. Across much of Europe, Merkel—that Protestant minister’s daughter—is resented as a rigid, self-righteous puritan, while support for the E.U. has fallen to historic lows.

Merkel’s commitment to a united Europe is not that of an idealist. Rather, it comes from her sense of German interest—a soft form of nationalism that

reflects the country’s growing confidence and strength. The historic German problem, which Henry Kissinger described as being “too big for Europe, too small for the world,” can be overcome only by keeping Europe together. Kurbjuweit said, “She needs Europe because—this is hard to say, but it’s true—Europe makes Germany bigger.”

Yet Merkel’s austerity policies have helped make Europe weaker, and Europe’s weakness has begun affecting Germany, whose export-driven economy depends on its neighbors for markets. The German economy has slowed this year, while European growth is anemic. Nevertheless, Germany remains committed to a balanced budget in 2015, its first since 1969, and is standing in the way of a euro-zone monetary policy of stimulating growth by buying up debt. In recent weeks, with global markets falling, a divide has opened between Merkel and other European leaders.

After 2005, Merkel had to mute her free-market thinking at home in order to preserve her political viability. Instead, she exported the ideas to the rest of the Continent, applying them with no apparent regard for macroeconomic conditions, as if the virtues of thrift and discipline constituted the mission of a resurgent Germany in Europe. Merkel is obsessed with demography and economic competitiveness. She loves reading charts. In September, one of her senior aides showed me a stack of them that the Chancellor had just been examining; they showed the relative performance of different European economies across a variety of indicators. In unit-labor costs, he pointed out, Germany lies well below the euro-zone average. But the population of Germany—the largest of any nation in Europe—is stagnant and aging. “A country like that cannot run up more and more debt,” the senior aide said.

Stefan Reinecke, of the left-wing daily *Die Tageszeitung*, said, “Half an hour into every speech she gives, when everyone has fallen asleep, she says three things. She says Europe has just seven per cent of the world’s people, twenty-five per cent of the economic output, but fifty per cent of the social welfare—and we have to change this.” Merkel frets that

Germany has no Silicon Valley. “There’s no German Facebook, no German Amazon,” her senior aide said. “There is this German tendency, which you can see in Berlin: we’re so affluent that we assume we always will be, even though we don’t know where it will come from. Completely complacent.”

It makes Germans acutely uneasy that their country is too strong while Europe is too weak, but Merkel never discusses the problem. Joschka Fischer—who has praised Merkel on other issues—criticizes this silence. “Intellectually, it’s a big, big challenge to transform national strength into European strength,” he said. “And the majority of the political and economic élite in Germany has not a clue about that, including the Chancellor.”

The two world leaders with whom Merkel has her most important and complex relationships are Obama, who has won her reluctant respect, and Putin, who has earned her deep distrust. When the Wall fell, Putin was a K.G.B. major stationed in Dresden. He used his fluent German and a pistol to keep a crowd of East Germans from storming the K.G.B. bureau and looting secret files, which he then destroyed. Twelve years later, a far more conciliatory Putin, by then Russia’s President, addressed the Bundestag “in the language of Goethe, Schiller, and Kant,” declaring that “Russia is a friendly-minded European country” whose “main goal is a stable peace on this continent.” Putin praised democracy and denounced totalitarianism, receiving an ovation from an audience that included Merkel.



After decades of war, destruction, and occupation, German-Russian relations returned to the friendlier dynamic that had prevailed before the twentieth century. German policymakers spoke of a “strategic partnership” and a “rapprochement through economic interlocking.” In 2005, Schröder approved the construction of a gas pipeline that crossed the Baltic Sea into Russia. He and Putin developed a friendship, with Schröder calling Putin a “flawless democrat.” In the past decade, Germany has become one of Russia’s largest trading partners, and Russia now provides Germany with forty

per cent of its gas. Two hundred thousand Russian citizens live in Germany, and Russia has extensive connections inside the German business community and in the Social Democratic Party.

As a Russian speaker who hitchhiked through the Soviet republics in her youth, Merkel has a feel for Russia's aspirations and resentments which Western politicians lack. In her office, there's a framed portrait of Catherine the Great, the Prussian-born empress who led Russia during a golden age in the eighteenth century. But, as a former East German, Merkel has few illusions about Putin. After Putin's speech at the Bundestag, Merkel told a colleague, "This is typical K.G.B. talk. Never trust this guy." Ulrich, of *Die Zeit*, said, "She's always been skeptical of Putin, but she doesn't detest him. Detesting would be too much emotion."

When Putin and Merkel meet, they sometimes speak in German (he's better in her language than she is in his), and Putin corrects his own interpreter to let Merkel know that nothing is lost on him. Putin's brand of macho elicits in Merkel a kind of scientific empathy. In 2007, during discussions about energy supplies at the Russian President's residence in Sochi, Putin summoned his black Lab, Koni, into the room where he and Merkel were seated. As the dog approached and sniffed her, Merkel froze, visibly frightened. She'd been bitten once, in 1995, and her fear of dogs couldn't have escaped Putin, who sat back and enjoyed the moment, legs spread wide. "I'm sure it will behave itself," he said. Merkel had the presence of mind to reply, in Russian, "It doesn't eat journalists, after all." The German press corps was furious on her behalf—"ready to hit Putin," according to a reporter who was present. Later, Merkel interpreted Putin's behavior. "I understand why he has to do this—to prove he's a man," she told a group of reporters. "He's afraid of his own weakness. Russia has nothing, no successful politics or economy. All they have is this."

In early 2008, when President George W. Bush sought to bring Ukraine and Georgia into NATO, Merkel blocked the move out of concern for Russia's reaction and because it could cause destabilization along Europe's eastern edge. Later that year, after Russia invaded two regions of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia,

Merkel changed her position and expressed openness to Georgia's joining NATO. She remained careful to balance European unity, the alliance with America, German business interests, and continued engagement with Russia. Kaiser Wilhelm I is supposed to have remarked that only Bismarck, who tied Germany to a set of countervailing alliances, could juggle four or five balls. Bismarck's successor, Leo von Caprivi, complained that he could barely manage two, and in 1890 he ended Germany's treaty with Russia, helping set the stage for the First World War.

When, this past March, Russia annexed Crimea and incited a separatist war in eastern Ukraine, it fell to Merkel to succeed where earlier German leaders had catastrophically failed.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine stunned the history-haunted, rule-upholding Germans. "Putin surprised everyone," including Merkel, her senior aide told me. "The swiftness, the brutality, the coldheartedness. It's just so twentieth century—the tanks, the propaganda, the agents provocateurs."

Suddenly, everyone in Berlin was reading Christopher Clark's "The Sleepwalkers," about the origins of the First World War. The moral that many Germans drew was to tread carefully—small fires could quickly turn into conflagrations. During a discussion about the First World War with students at the German Historical Museum, Merkel said, "I am regarded as a permanent de-layer sometimes, but I think it is essential and extremely important to take people along and really listen to them in political talks."

Merkel ruled out military options, yet declared that Russia's actions were unacceptable—territorial integrity was an inviolable part of Europe's postwar order—and required a serious Western response. For the first time in her Chancellorship, she didn't have the public with her. In early polls, a plurality of Germans wanted Merkel to take a middle position between the West and Russia. A substantial minority—especially in the former East—sympathized with Russia's claim that NATO expansion had pushed Putin to act defensively, and that Ukrainian leaders in Kiev were Fascist thugs. Helmut Schmidt, the Social

Democratic former Chancellor, expressed some of these views, as did Gerhard Schröder—who had become a paid lobbyist for a company controlled by the Russian state oil-and-gas giant Gazprom, and who celebrated his seventieth birthday with Putin, in St. Petersburg, a month after Russia annexed Crimea. The attitude of Schmidt and Schröder deeply embarrassed the Social Democrats.

A gap opened up between élite and popular opinion: newspapers editorializing for a hard line against Russia were inundated with critical letters. Merkel, true to form, did nothing to try to close the divide. For most Germans, the crisis inspired a combination of indifference and anxiety. Ukraine was talked about, if at all, as a far-off place, barely a part of Europe (not as the victim of huge German crimes in the Second World War). Germans resented having their beautiful sleep disturbed. "The majority want peace and to live a comfortable life," Alexander Rahr, a Russian energy expert who advises the German oil-and-gas company Wintershall, said. "They don't want conflict or a new Cold War. For this, they wish the U.S. would stay away from Europe. If Russia wants Ukraine, which not so many people have sympathy with, let them have it." In a way, Germany's historical guilt—which includes more than twenty million Soviet dead in the Second World War—adds to the country's passivity. A sense of responsibility for the past demands that Germany do nothing in the present. Ulrich, of *Die Zeit*, expressed the point brutally: "We once killed so much—therefore, we can't die today."

Germans and Russians are bound together by such terrible memories that any suggestion of conflict leads straight to the unthinkable. Michael Naumann put the Ukraine crisis in the context of "this enormous emotional nexus between perpetrator and victim," one that leaves Germans perpetually in the weaker position. In 1999, Naumann, at that time the culture minister under Schröder, tried to negotiate the return of five million artifacts taken out of East Germany by the Russians after the Second World War. During the negotiations, he and his Russian counterpart, Nikolai Gubenko, shared their stories. Naumann, who was born in 1941, lost

his father a year later, at the Battle of Stalingrad. Gubenko was also born in 1941, and his father was also killed in action. Five months later, Gubenko's mother was hanged by the Germans.

"Checkmate," the Russian told the German. Both men cried.

"There was nothing to negotiate," Naumann recalled. "He said, 'We will not give anything back, as long as I live.'"

Merkel takes a characteristically unsentimental view of Russia. Alexander Lambsdorff, a German member of the European Parliament, said, "She thinks of Russia as a traditional hegemonic power that was subdued for a while and now has reemerged." Ukraine forced Merkel into a juggling act worthy of Bismarck, and she began spending two or three hours daily on the crisis. Publicly, she said little, waiting for Russian misbehavior to bring the German public around. She needed to keep her coalition in the Bundestag on board, including the more pro-Russian Social Democrats. And she had to hold Europe together, which meant staying in close touch with twenty-seven other leaders and understanding each one's constraints: how sanctions on Russia would affect London's financial markets; whether the French would agree to suspend delivery of amphibious assault ships already sold to the Russians; whether Poland and the Baltic states felt assured of NATO's support; the influence of Russian propaganda in Greece; Bulgaria's dependence on Russian gas. For sanctions to bite, Europe had to remain united.

Merkel also needed to keep open her channel to Putin. Even after the E.U. passed its first round of sanctions, in March, it was not German policy to isolate Russia—the two countries are too enmeshed. Merkel is Putin's most important interlocutor in the West; they talk every week, if not more often. "She's talked to Putin more than Obama, Hollande, and Cameron combined have over these past months," the senior official said. "She has a way of talking to him that nobody has. Cameron and Hollande call him to be able to say they're world leaders and had the conversation." Merkel can be tough to the point of unpleasantness, while offering Putin ways out of his own mess. Above all, she tries to understand how he thinks. "With Russia now, when one feels very angry I force myself



to talk regardless of my feelings," she said at the German Historical Museum. "And every time I do this I am surprised at how many other views you can have on a matter which I find totally clear. Then I have to deal with those views, and this can also trigger something new." Soon after the annexation of Crimea, Merkel reportedly told Obama that Putin was living "in another world." She set about bringing him back to reality.

A German official told me, "The Chancellor thinks Putin believes that we're decadent, we're gay, we have women with beards"—a reference to Conchita Wurst, an Austrian drag queen who won the 2014 Eurovision song contest. "That it's a strong Russia of real men versus the decadent West that's too pampered, too spoiled, to stand up for their beliefs if it costs them one per cent of their standard of living. That's his wager. We have to prove it's not true." It's true enough that, if Merkel were to make a ringing call to defend Western values against Russian aggression, her domestic support would evaporate. When eight members of a European observer group, including four Germans, were taken hostage by pro-Russian separatists in April—prac-

tically a *casus belli*, had they been Americans—the German government simply asked Putin to work for their release. Merkel was playing the game that had been successful for her in German politics: waiting for her adversary to self-destruct.

On at least one phone call, Putin lied to Merkel, something that he hadn't done in the past. In May, after Ukrainian separatists organized a widely denounced referendum, the official Russian statement was more positive than the stance that Merkel believed she and Putin had agreed on in advance. She cancelled their call for the following week—she had been misled, and wanted him to sense her anger. "The Russians were stunned," the senior official said. "How could she cut the link?" Germany was the one country that Russia could not afford to lose. Karl-Georg Wellmann, a member of parliament from Merkel's party, who sits on the foreign-affairs committee, said that, as the crisis deepened and Germans began pulling capital out of Russia, Kremlin officials privately told their German counterparts that they wanted a way out: "We went too far—what can we do?" In Moscow restaurants, after the third vodka, the Russians would raise



*"Wait for it."*

•      •

the ghosts of 1939: "If we got together, Germany and Russia, we would be the strongest power in the world."

On June 6th, in Normandy, Merkel and Putin met for the first time since the crisis began, along with Obama, Hollande, Cameron, and Petro Poroshenko, the newly elected President of Ukraine, to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of D Day. News photographs showed Merkel greeting Putin like a disapproving hostess—lips pursed, eyebrows arched—while Putin's hard features came as close to ingratiating as is physically possible. In the optics of power, she was winning. "This political isolation hurts him," her senior aide said. "He doesn't like to be left out." (Russia had just been suspended from the Group of Eight.) Later, before lunch, Merkel orchestrated a brief conversation between Putin and Poroshenko. On the anniver-

sary of D Day, Germany's leader was at the center of everything. As Kurbjuweit put it, "That was astonishing, to see all the winners of the Second World War, and to see the loser and the country which was responsible for all this—and she's the leader, everyone wants to talk to her! That is very, very strange. And this is only possible, I think, because it's Merkel—because she's so nice and quiet."

The final ball Merkel has to keep in the air is the American one. Her opinion of Barack Obama has risen as his popularity has declined. In July, 2008, as a Presidential candidate, Obama wanted to speak at the Brandenburg Gate, in Berlin—the historic heart of the city, a location reserved for heads of state and government, not U.S. senators. Merkel rebuffed the request, so instead Obama spoke about European-American unity at the Victory Column, in the Tiergarten,

before two hundred thousand delirious fans—a crowd Merkel could never have mustered, let alone mesmerized. "What puts her off about Obama is his high-flying rhetoric," the senior official said. "She distrusts it, and she's no good at it. She says, 'I want to see if he can deliver.' If you want to sum up her philosophy, it's 'under-promise and over-deliver.'"

In Obama's first years in office, Merkel was frequently and unfavorably compared with him, and the criticism annoyed her. According to *Stern*, her favorite joke ends with Obama walking on water. "She does not really think Obama is a helpful partner," Torsten Krauel, a senior writer for *Die Welt*, said. "She thinks he is a professor, a loner, unable to build coalitions." Merkel's relationship with Bush was much warmer than hers with Obama, the long-time political associate said. A demonstrative man like Bush sparks a response, whereas Obama and Merkel are like "two hit men in the same room. They don't have to talk—both are quiet, both are killers." For weeks in 2011 and 2012, amid American criticism of German policy during the euro-zone crisis, there was no contact between Merkel and Obama—she would ask for a conversation, but the phone call from the White House never came.

As she got to know Obama better, though, she came to appreciate more the ways in which they were alike—analytical, cautious, dry-humored, remote. Benjamin Rhodes, Obama's deputy national-security adviser, told me that "the President thinks there's not another leader he's worked closer with than her." He added, "They're so different publicly, but they're actually quite similar." (Ulrich joked, "Obama is Merkel in a better suit.") During the Ukraine crisis, the two have consulted frequently on the timing of announcements and been careful to keep the American and the European positions close. Obama is the antithesis of the swaggering leaders whom Merkel specializes in eating for breakfast. On a trip to Washington, she met with a number of senators, including the Republicans John McCain, of Arizona, and Jeff Sessions, of Alabama. She found them more preoccupied with the need to display toughness against America's former Cold War adversary than with events in Ukraine themselves.

(McCain called Merkel's approach "milquetoast.") To Merkel, Ukraine was a practical problem to be solved. This mirrored Obama's view.

On the day I spoke with Rhodes, July 17th, the TV in his office, in the White House basement, showed the debris of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 strewn across a field in eastern Ukraine. The cause of the crash wasn't yet clear, but Rhodes said, "If it *was* a Russian shoot-down, and Americans and Europeans were on board, that's going to change everything." In Germany, the change happened immediately. The sight of separatist fighters looting the belongings of dead passengers who had been shot out of the sky hit Germans more personally than months of ugly fighting among Ukrainians had. A civilian airliner, Dutch victims: "People realized that the sentimental attitude toward Putin and Russia was based on false assumptions," a German diplomat said. The idea of maintaining equidistance between Russia and the West on Ukraine vanished. Though the crisis was beginning to hurt the German economy, Merkel now had three-quarters of the public behind her. In late July, the E.U. agreed on a sweeping new round of financial and energy sanctions.

Since then, Russian troops and weapons have crossed the border in large numbers, and the war has grown worse. In a speech in Australia last week, Merkel warned that Russian aggression was in danger of spreading, and she called for patience in a long struggle: "Who would've thought that twenty-five years after the fall of the Wall . . . something like that can happen right at the heart of Europe?" But, on the day she spoke, the E.U. failed to pass a new round of sanctions against Russia. Guttenberg, the former defense minister, said, "We are content with keeping the status quo, and kicking the can up the road—not down—and it keeps falling back on our feet."

The close coöperation behind the scenes between Washington and Berlin coincides with a period of public estrangement. Germans told me that anti-Americanism in Germany is more potent now than at any time since the cruise-missile controversy of the early eighties. The proximate cause is the rev-

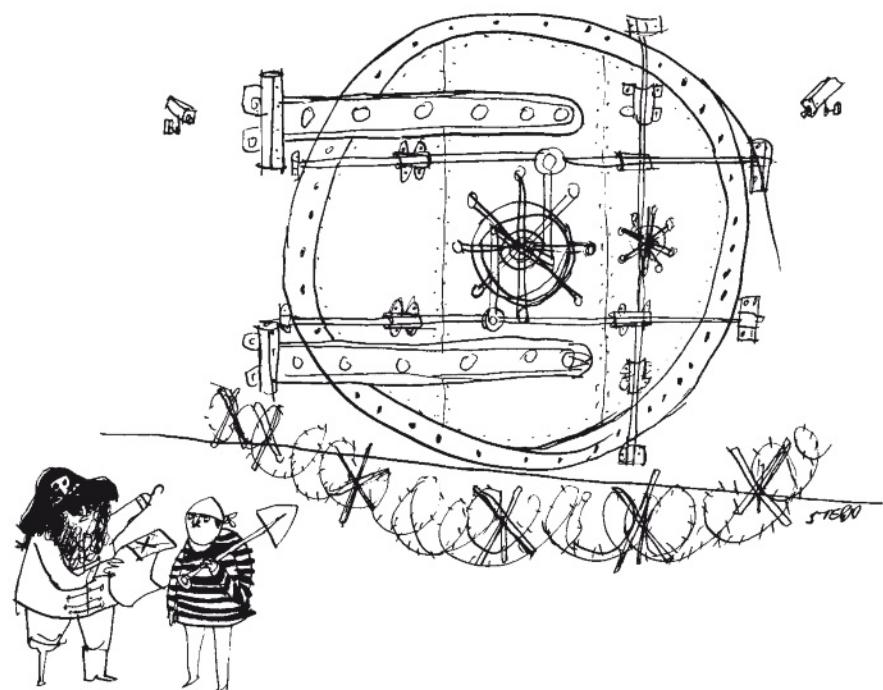
elation, last fall, based on documents leaked by Edward Snowden to *Der Spiegel*, that the National Security Agency had been recording Merkel's cell-phone calls for a decade. Merkel, ever impassive, expressed more annoyance than outrage, but with the German public the sense of betrayal was deep. It hasn't subsided—N.S.A. transgressions came up in almost every conversation I had in Berlin—particularly because Obama, while promising that the eavesdropping had stopped, never publicly apologized. (He conveyed his regret to Merkel privately.) "Tapping her phone is more than impolite," Rainer Eppelmann, the former East German dissident, said. "It's something you just don't do. Friends don't spy on friends." (American officials I spoke with, though troubled by the effects of the breach, rolled their eyes over German naïveté and hypocrisy, since the spying goes both ways.)

German officials approached the Americans for a no-spy agreement, and were refused. The U.S. has no such arrangement with any country, including those in the so-called Five Eyes—the English-speaking allies that share virtually all intelligence. German officials claimed that the U.S. offered membership in the Five Eyes, then withdrew the offer. The Americans denied it. "It was never seriously discussed," a senior Ad-

ministration official said. "Five Eyes isn't just an agreement. It's an infrastructure developed over sixty years."

"I tend to believe them," the German diplomat said. "The Germans didn't want Five Eyes when we learned about it. We're not in a position, legally, to join, because our intelligence is so limited in scope."

In July, officials of the German Federal Intelligence Service, or B.N.D., arrested a bureaucrat in their Munich office on suspicion of spying for the U.S. He had been caught soliciting business from the Russians via Gmail, and, when the Germans asked their American counterparts for information on the man, his account was suddenly shut down. Brought in for questioning, he admitted having passed documents (apparently innocuous) to a C.I.A. agent in Austria for two years, for which he was paid twenty-five thousand euros. The Germans retaliated, in unprecedented fashion, by expelling the C.I.A. station chief in Berlin. Coming soon after the N.S.A. revelations, this second scandal was worse than a crime—it was a blunder. Merkel was beside herself with exasperation. No U.S. official, in Washington or Berlin, seemed to have weighed the intelligence benefits against the potential political costs. The President didn't know about the spy. "It's fair to say the President should expect



*"According to the map, the treasure should be right behind that door."*

people would take into account political dynamics in making judgments about what we do and don't do in Germany," Rhodes said.

The spying scandals have undermined German public support for the NATO alliance just when it's needed most in the standoff with Russia. Lambsdorff, the E.U. parliamentarian, told me, "When I stand before constituents and say, 'We need a strong relationship with the U.S.,' they say, 'What's the point? They lie to us.'" Germany's rise to preëminence in Europe has made Merkel a committed transatlanticist, but "that's useless now," Lambsdorff said. "It deducts from her capital. Rebuffing Washington is good now in Germany."

Obama was concerned enough to dispatch his chief of staff, Denis McDonough, to Berlin in late July, to mollify German officials. During a four-hour meeting, they agreed to create a framework for clearer rules about spying and intelligence sharing. But the details remain to be worked out, and barely half the German public now expresses a favorable view of the U.S.—the lowest level in Europe, other than in perpetually hostile Greece.

In a sense, German anti-Americanism is always waiting to be tapped. There's a left-wing, anti-capitalist strain going back to the sixties, and a right-wing, anti-democratic version that's even older. In the broad middle, where German politics plays out today, many Germans, especially older ones, once regarded the U.S. as the father of their democracy—a role that sets America up to disappoint. Peter Schneider, the novelist and journalist, expressed the attitude this way: "You have created a model of a savior, and now we find by looking at you that you are not perfect at all—much less, you are actually corrupt, you are terrible businessmen, you have no ideals anymore." With the Iraq War, Guantánamo, drones, the unmet expectations of the Obama Presidency, and now spying, "you actually have acted against your own promises, and so we feel very deceived."

**B**eneath the rise in anti-Americanism and the German sympathy with Russia, something deeper might be at work. During the First World War, Thomas Mann put aside writing "The

Magic Mountain" and began composing a strange, passionate series of essays about Germany and the war. They were published in 1918, just before the Armistice, as "Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man." In it, Mann embraced the German cause in terms of national character and philosophy. He allied himself, as an artist, with Germany—"culture, soul, freedom, art"—against the liberal civilization of France and England that his older brother Heinrich supported, where intellect was always politicized. German tradition was authoritarian, conservative, and "nonpolitical"—closer to the Russian spirit than to the shallow materialism of democratic Europe. The war represented Germany's age-old rebellion against the West. Imperial Germany refused to accept at gunpoint the universal principles of equality and human rights. Though Mann became a vocal supporter of democratic values in exile during the Nazi years, he never repudiated "Reflections."

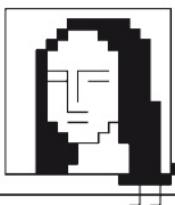
Several people in Berlin suggested that this difficult, forgotten book had something to say about Germany in the age of Merkel. The country's peaceful reunification and its strength through the euro crisis might be returning Germany to an identity that's older than the postwar Federal Republic, whose Basic Law was written under heavy American influence. "West Germany was a good country," Georg Diez, a columnist and author, told me. "It was young, sexy, daring, Western—American. But

the Chancellor they want. "Merkel took the politics out of politics," Diez said.

Merkel, at sixty, is the most successful politician in modern German history. Her popularity floats around seventy-five per cent—unheard of in an era of resentment toward elected leaders. Plainness remains her political signature, with inflections of Protestant virtue and Prussian uprightness. Once, with a group of journalists at a hotel bar in the Middle East, she said, "Can you believe it? Here I am, the Chancellor! What am I doing here? When I was growing up in the G.D.R., we imagined capitalists with long black cloaks and top hats and cigars and big feet, like cartoons. And now here I am, and they have to listen to me!" Of course, there's something calculated about her public image. "She's so careful not to show any pretensions—which is a kind of pretension," the senior official said.

Merkel still lives in central Berlin, in a rent-controlled apartment across a canal from the Pergamon, the great neoclassical antiquities museum. The name on the brass buzzer is her husband's—"PROF. DR. SAUER"—and a solitary policeman stands outside. Dwarfed by her vast office in the massive concrete-and-glass Chancellery, Merkel works at an ordinary writing table just inside the door, preferring it to the thirteen-foot black slab that Schröder installed at the far end of the room. "This woman is neurotically busy," the longtime political associate said. "She sleeps never more than five hours. I can call her at one o'clock at night. She's awake reading bureaucratic papers, not literature."

Merkel entertains guests at the Chancellery with German comfort food—potato soup and stuffed cabbage. When she eats at her favorite Italian restaurant, it's with just a few friends, and she doesn't look up from the conversation to greet her public, who know to leave her alone. When her husband calls the Philharmoniker for tickets (Merkel and Sauer are music lovers, with a passion for Wagner and Webern) and is offered comps, he insists on giving his credit-card number, and the couple take their seats almost unnoticed. A friend of mine once sat next to Merkel at the salon she frequents, off Kurfürstendamm, and they chatted about hair. "Color is the most important



maybe it was only a skin. Germany is becoming more German, less Western. Germany has discovered its national roots."

Diez didn't mean that this was a good thing. He meant that Germany is becoming less democratic, because what Germans fundamentally want is stability, security, economic growth—above all, to be left in peace while someone else watches their money and keeps their country out of wars. They have exactly

thing for a woman," the Chancellor, whose hair style is no longer the object of ridicule, offered.

Earlier this year, President Joachim Gauck made headlines when he called on Germany to take its global responsibilities more seriously, including its role in military affairs. It was the kind of speech that Merkel (who had no comment) would never give, especially after a poll commissioned by the foreign ministry in May showed that sixty per cent of the public was skeptical of greater German involvement in the world. German journalists find Merkel nearly impossible to cover. "We have to look for topics in the pudding," Ulrich Schulte, who reports on the Chancellor for *Die Tageszeitung*, said. The private Merkel they admire and enjoy but are forbidden to quote disappears in public. Any aide or friend who betrays the smallest confidence is cast out. The German media, reflecting the times, are increasingly centrist, preoccupied with "wellness" and other life-style issues. Almost every political reporter I spoke with voted for Merkel, despite the sense that she's making their work irrelevant. There was no reason not to.

Meanwhile, Merkel has neutralized the opposition, in large part by stealing its issues. She has embraced labor unions, lowered the retirement age for certain workers, and increased state payments to mothers and the old. (She told Dirk Kurbjuweit, of *Der Spiegel*, that, as Germany aged, she depended more on elderly voters.) In 2011, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, in Japan, shocked Merkel, and she reversed her position on nuclear power: Germany would phase it out through the next decade, while continuing to lead the world's large industrial economies in solar and wind energy. (A quarter of the country's energy now comes from renewable sources.) Meanwhile, she's tried to rid her party of intolerant ideas—for example, by speaking out for the need to be more welcoming to immigrants. Supporters of the Social Democrats and the Greens have fewer and fewer reasons to vote at all, and turnout has declined. Schneider, a leading member of the generation of '68, said, "This is the genius of Angela Merkel: she has actually made party lines senseless."

This fall, in elections held in three states of the former East Germany, a new right-wing party, Alternative for Germany

# Intelligent Design



(AfD), showed strength, capturing as much as ten per cent of the vote. AfD wants Germany to withdraw from the euro zone and opposes Merkel's liberal policies on gay marriage and immigration. In moving her own party to the center, Merkel has created a space in German politics for a populist equivalent to France's Front National and the United Kingdom Independence Party. If the German economy continues to slow, Merkel will find it hard to float unchallenged above party politics as Mutti, the World Cup-winning soccer team's biggest fan.

For now, the most pressing political question in Berlin is whether she'll stand for a fourth term, in 2017. Joschka Fischer described Germany under Merkel as returning to the Biedermeier period, the years between the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1815, and the liberal revolutions of 1848, when Central Europe was at peace and the middle class focussed on its growing wealth and decorative style. "She is governing Germany in a period where the sun is shining every day, and that's the dream of every democratically elected politician," Fischer said—but "there is no intellectual debate." I suggested that every Biedermeier has to end. "Yes," he said. "Mostly in a clash."

A political consensus founded on economic success, with a complacent citizenry, a compliant press, and a vastly popular leader who rarely deviates from public opinion—Merkel's Germany is reminiscent of Eisenhower's America. But what Americans today might envy, with our intimations of national decline, makes thoughtful Germans uneasy. Their democracy is not old enough to be given a rest.

"We got democracy from you, as a gift I would say, in the forties and fifties," Kurbjuweit told me. "But I'm not sure if these democratic attitudes are very well established in my country. We Germans always have to practice democracy—we're still on the training program." Kurbjuweit has just published a book called "There Is No Alternative." It's a phrase that Merkel coined for her euro policy, but Kurbjuweit uses it to describe the Chancellor's success in draining all the blood out of German politics. "I don't say democracy will disappear if Merkel is Chancellor for twenty years," he said. "But I think democracy is on the retreat in the world, and there is a problem with democracy in our country. You have to keep the people used to the fact that democracy is a pain in the ass, and that they have to fight, and that everyone is a politician—not only Merkel." ♦

# THE EXCREMENT EXPERIMENT

*Treating disease with fecal transplants.*

BY EMILY EAKIN

One morning last fall, Jon Ritter, an architectural historian living in Greenwich Village, woke to find an e-mail from a neighbor, who had an unusual request. “Hi Jon, This is Tom Gravel, from Apt. 4N,” the e-mail began. “I wanted to check in and see if you may be open to helping me with a health condition.” Gravel, a project manager for a land-conservation group, explained that he had Crohn’s disease, an autoimmune disorder that causes inflammation of the intestinal tract along with unpredictable, often incapacitating episodes of abdominal pain and bloody diarrhea. His doctor had prescribed a succession of increasingly powerful drugs, none of which had helped. But recently Gravel had experimented with a novel therapy that, though distasteful to contemplate, seemed to relieve his symptoms: fecal transplantation, in which stool from a healthy person is transferred to the colon of someone who is sick. He hoped to enlist Ritter as a stool donor.

“I realize this is really out there,” Gravel wrote. “But I think you and your family are the nicest people in our building, and I thought I might start with lucky you.”

Crohn’s disease affects as many as seven hundred thousand Americans, but, like other autoimmune disorders, it remains poorly understood and is considered incurable. (Autoimmune disorders are thought to arise when the immune system attacks healthy tissue, mistaking it for a threat.) The standard treatments for Crohn’s often don’t work, or work only temporarily, and many have serious side effects. When the disease cannot be managed by drugs, surgery to remove part of the colon is often the only option. Gravel, who is thirty-nine, is slight and mild-mannered, with delicate features and floppy brown hair. He had endured nearly three years of debilitating symptoms, as well as a shifting regimen of enemas, suppositories, shots, supplements, and, for several months, intravenous infusions of Remicade, a potent immunosuppressant, at a

cost of more than twelve thousand dollars each. “I would tell my wife in the morning, ‘I’m getting out my arsenal,’ ” Gravel told me.

Even so, blood tests continued to show high levels of inflammation. His daily life was governed by calculations of proximity to the nearest rest room. “I’d get nervous if I had to go to the bank,” he said. The checkout line at Whole Foods was an ordeal. By August, 2013, Gravel had stopped all his medications and was trying to manage his disease through a strict diet of broiled meat and fish and puréed vegetables. His mother showed him an article from the *Times* about a man who had been nearly bedridden by ulcerative colitis—a condition related to Crohn’s—and who had largely recovered after a month or so of fecal transplants. Gravel found a how-to book on Amazon and bought the recommended equipment: a blender, a rectal syringe, saline solution, surgical gloves, Tupperware containers. His wife agreed to be his donor. Doctors and patient-advocacy Web sites stress that donors should be screened for transmissible diseases, but Gravel and his wife decided to skip this step. “She’d been healthy as long as I’d known her,” he told me.

His doctor was unable to offer advice, saying that too little was known about fecal transplants. Nor could he legally provide the procedure. The Food and Drug Administration regards fecal transplantation as an experimental treatment, and doctors must apply to the agency for permission before offering it to Crohn’s patients. Just as Gravel began to research the procedure, his wife received a diagnosis of breast cancer. They began daily transplants anyway, and soon he was feeling much better. But his wife was scheduled to have surgery, followed by chemotherapy. Gravel needed another donor, someone nearby. “I immediately thought of Jon,” he said.

A strapping forty-eight-year-old partial to organic food, Ritter exuded good

health. “At first I was kind of shocked,” he told me. “Pretty quickly I realized I didn’t really have a problem with it. What he wanted was something I wasn’t using—that was going to waste.”

No one knows how many people have undergone fecal transplants—the official term is fecal microbiota transplantation, or FMT—but the number is thought to be at least ten thousand and climbing rapidly. New research suggests that the microbes in our guts—and, consequently, in our stool—may play a role in conditions ranging from autoimmune disorders to allergies and obesity, and reports of recoveries by patients who, with or without the help of doctors, have received these bacteria-rich infusions have spurred demand for the procedure. A year and a half ago, a few dozen physicians in the United States offered FMT. Today, hundreds do, and OpenBiome, a non-profit stool bank founded last year by graduate students at M.I.T., ships more than fifty specimens each week to hospitals in thirty-six states. The Cleveland Clinic named fecal transplantation one of the top ten medical innovations for 2014, and biotech companies are competing to put stool-based therapies through clinical trials and onto the market. In medicine, at any rate, human excrement has become a precious commodity.

Science writers love to cite the freakish fact that for every one of our cells we are hosts to ten microbial ones, and nowhere are there as many as in our digestive tracts, which house about a hundred trillion bacteria, fungi, viruses, and other tiny creatures. (As one gastroenterologist put it to me, with only mild exaggeration, “We’re ten per cent human and ninety per cent poo.”) Collectively, this invisible population is known as the gut microbiome, and lately it has become an object of intense scientific interest. “You can hardly mention a disease today where something hasn’t been looked at regarding the



*Some disease sufferers have benefitted from fecal transplantation, in which a healthy person's stool is transferred to a sick person's colon.*

microbiota,” Lawrence Brandt, a gastroenterologist at Montefiore Medical Center, in the Bronx, who was among the first physicians in this country to perform fecal transplants, told me.

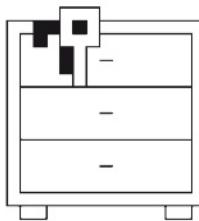
For years, efforts to study the microbiome were stymied by the number of species involved and the difficulty of culturing finicky strains in the lab. But the advent of genetic-sequencing technology has made it possible to identify microbes by their DNA, spawning a frenzy of research, whose highlights, routinely catalogued in the popular press, can have an air of science fiction. (A recent headline in the *Times*: “HOW BACTERIA MAY CONTROL OUR BEHAVIOR.”) Much of the research is still preliminary, and a lot of it depends on stool, which by dry weight is roughly forty per cent microbes and remains our best proxy for the brimming universe within.

FMT, the chief medical application of microbiome research to date, is also at a rudimentary stage. The procedure has been proven to work only in the case of a single disease: a bacterial infection known as *Clostridium difficile*. The infection, which causes symptoms similar to Crohn’s, afflicts more than five hundred thousand people each year, killing fifteen thousand of them, almost all hospital patients who received antibiotics. Like a weed killer that slays not just the invading vine but, inadvertently, the entire garden, broad-spectrum antibiotics, which are prescribed prophylactically to patients undergoing surgery, can destroy gut flora, making it easier for *C. difficile* to take hold. Moreover, the standard treatment for the disease—vancomycin, itself an antibiotic—is often ineffective against drug-resistant, “hypervirulent” new strains.

Scattered case reports in the medical literature described *C. difficile* patients, some on their deathbeds, who received fecal transplants and recovered, often within hours. Then, in January, 2013, *The New England Journal of Medicine* published the results of the first randomized controlled trial involving FMT, comparing the therapy to treatment with vancomycin for patients with recurrent disease. The trial was ended early when doctors realized that it would be unethical to continue: fewer than a third of the patients given vancomycin recovered, compared with ninety-four per

cent of those who underwent fecal transplants—the vast majority after a single treatment. A glowing editorial accompanying the article declared that the trial’s significance “goes far beyond the treatment of recurrent or severe *C. difficile*” and predicted a spate of research into the benefits of fecal transplants for other diseases.

“Nothing in health care works ninety per cent of the time,” Mark B. Smith, a microbiologist at M.I.T. who is a co-



founder of OpenBiome, the stool bank, told me. Zain Kassam, a gastroenterologist who is OpenBiome’s chief medical officer, put it this way: “It’s the closest thing to a miracle I’ve seen in medicine.”

Smith and his colleagues are stool’s most enterprising pitchmen, displaying a zeal for the collection and distribution of human waste that, as much as any other single force, has helped to catapult FMT to the front lines of medical treatment. The inspiration for OpenBiome was a friend of Smith’s, an otherwise healthy man in his twenties who, in 2011, acquired *C. difficile* following gallbladder surgery. “He ended up on seven rounds of vancomycin over a year and half,” Smith told me. “He was very sick.” The man found a doctor who was open to the idea of performing a fecal transplant and waited six months while the doctor researched the procedure. Finally, unable to wait any longer, he gave himself a transplant using his roommate’s stool. “It worked for him,” Smith, who was then completing his Ph.D., said. “But the whole thing seemed very bizarre to me: why is it so hard to get a treatment that is very effective?”

Even patients who received fecal transplants from doctors had to find a donor themselves and pay for screening tests. Moreover, there was little consensus about what pathogens to screen for or how to perform a transplant. Enemas, colonoscopes, nasogastric tubes, gelatine capsules—all had served as delivery methods.

Some doctors were mixing random amounts of stool and saline solution in blenders. “It’s not sterile, it’s not completely safe,” Smith told me. “I thought, Gosh, we should just start a stool bank.” He persuaded a friend, who was about to enter business school at M.I.T., to join the project. “Eventually, we decided that the right model is the Red Cross, but for poop. It’s a medical commodity, and we’ll try to make it available in a safe and standardized way.”

Last spring, OpenBiome moved from a lab at M.I.T., where it had been storing stool in a borrowed freezer, to an office suite in Medford, a Boston suburb. In September, it sent out its thousandth stool treatment. At eight-thirty one morning last month, the office was already busy. In one room, a technician was preparing for the day’s stool donations by donning protective gear—a white coat, safety goggles, surgical gloves. A few feet away stood three industrial freezers, set to -80 degrees Celsius and stocked with small containers of stool, like so many bottles of chocolate milk. Smith, dressed in jeans and a blue-and-white plaid shirt, darted from room to room. “Who’s coming this morning?” he asked a colleague bent over a laptop. “Donor 29?” He poked his head into another room, where, near a cooler packed with dry ice, a whiteboard listed the destinations of a dozen shipments that had recently gone out. “We’ve added twenty-three hospitals this month!” he said approvingly.

Twenty-seven years old, with cornflower-blue eyes and a closely trimmed beard, Smith tends to speak in exclamations, punctuated by a pealing laugh. When, at ten after nine, the doorbell rang, he bounded to the door. In the hallway stood a stocky man in a faded baseball T-shirt cradling a blue plastic bag: Donor 29, a.k.a. Winnie the Poo. (All OpenBiome donors are given code names. A current staff favorite: Vladimir Putin.) Smith gingerly received his package, still warm. (OpenBiome requires that no more than an hour elapse between defecation and delivery.) Like all of the organization’s donors to date, Donor 29, a bioengineer who works elsewhere in the building, was recruited by Smith and his staff. “They were at the gym one morning, at seven-fifteen,” the donor explained. “They had a table outside, and they were just so enthusiastic.”

In fact, OpenBiome's screening process is extremely strict: fewer than twenty per cent of recruits pass the blood and stool tests. Use of antibiotics in the previous six months is cause for rejection, as is travel to the developing world and the presence in a stool test of pathogens like *B. hominis*, a parasite that is found in up to ten per cent of healthy people. Approved donors are given blue Cool Whip-style containers and paid forty dollars a specimen. Size is important: an ample donation can provide up to ten treatments, and a monthly prize is awarded for "the most generous contribution."

The technician, working under a sterile hood, weighed Donor 29's container: a hundred and twenty-seven grams. (The record is five hundred and eight.) "Not his best work," murmured Smith. Even so, the effort yielded five treatments. First, the technician transferred the stool to what looked like a large ziplock bag, divided down the middle by a fine mesh panel. Then she hung the bag inside a stainless-steel machine, about the size of a microwave, and flipped a switch. For two minutes, the bag was pummelled by metal paddles, leaving food particles on one side of the mesh and a homogenized slurry of microbes on the other. Using a long pipette, the technician distributed the slurry among five sterilized plastic bottles. Every so often, a faint odor wafted out from the hood, then dissipated.

The doorbell rang again. It was Donor 28 (Dumbledore) with a delivery, and, close on his heels, Donor 26 (Albutt Einstein), who mumbled apologetically that he had nothing to offer but promised to return in the afternoon. Smith nodded sympathetically.

It's a safe bet that few other miracle cures have had to overcome such repellent associations. The first known account of fecal transplantation dates to a fourth-century Chinese handbook by the physician Ge Hong, who prescribed "yellow soup"—a fecal suspension—as a remedy for severe diarrhea. (Ge Hong also discusses his cure for malarial fevers: a formula containing artemisinin, an herbal extract, which, rediscovered in the nineteen-seventies, is now part of the standard treatment for the disease.)

In the United States, the first description of FMT appeared sixteen centuries later, in 1958, when Ben Eiseman, a

surgeon at the V.A. Hospital in Denver, published four case reports in the journal *Surgery*. Stool was then widely assumed to be mainly a source of disease; there was little empirical support for the notion that bowel bacteria were important for health. Several of Eiseman's patients had become deathly ill after the requisite pre-operative course of antibiotics, however, and he concluded that the drugs were destroying normal gut flora. He sent a resident to collect stool specimens from a nearby maternity ward, reasoning that pregnant women were likely to be young and healthy and to have avoided antibiotics. The stool, transferred to Eiseman's patients, saved their lives.

The year that Eiseman began performing fecal transplants, Stanley Falkow, who went on to renown as a microbiologist at Stanford, was working in a lab at a hospital in Newport, Rhode Island. A doctor on staff shared Eiseman's belief that antibiotics were hard on gut microbes and instructed patients to bring a stool specimen when they were admitted for surgery. Falkow's job was to prepare capsules of the patients' stool for them to swallow after they'd been dis-

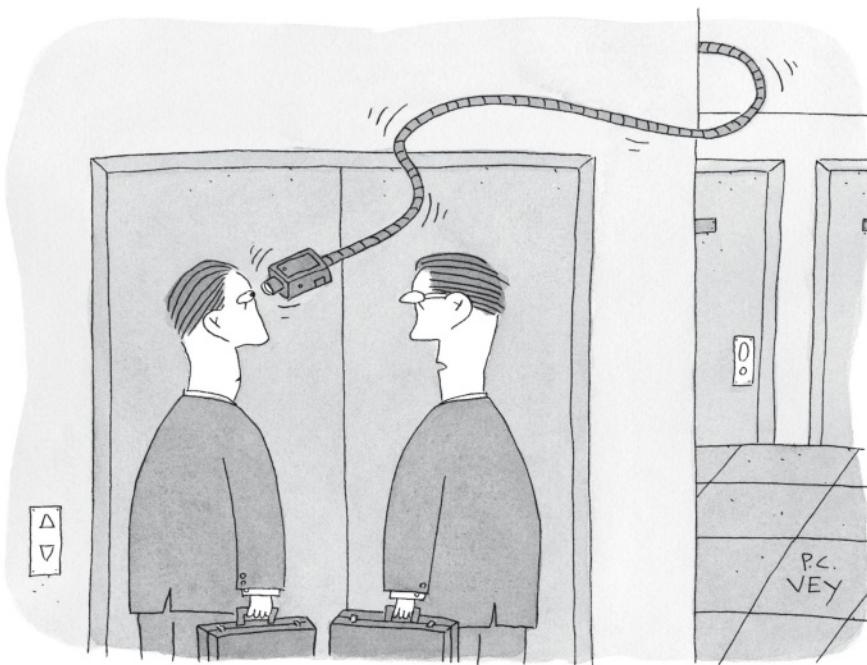
charged, on the hunch that these would help to prevent postoperative infections. "I was all for it," Falkow told me. "When we tried to culture the stool from patients who'd had antibiotics using conventional culture methods, you got no growth. Their stool doesn't even smell. Very few stools can make that statement."

A hospital administrator discovered what was going on and, as Falkow recalls it, confronted him, saying, "Is it true that you've been feeding the patients shit?" Falkow was fired on the spot. (He was reinstated when a doctor intervened on his behalf.) "It's a repulsive thought," Falkow says of fecal transplantation, "and people are still repulsed by it."

For years, virtually the only proponent of FMT was Thomas Borody, a gastroenterologist in Sydney, Australia, who, in 1988, after reading Eiseman's paper, decided to try a fecal transplant on a patient who had contracted an intestinal ailment in Fiji. The patient recovered, and Borody estimates that he has since performed the procedure five thousand times, including, with stool supplied by his father, on his mother, who suffered from crippling constipation. In addition to *C. difficile* patients,



*"Get outta here—I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die, too!"*



*"I'm sure they're not targeting you personally."*

Borody says that he has successfully treated people with autoimmune disorders, including Crohn's and multiple sclerosis.

In the case of *C. difficile*, the impact of a fecal transplant is straightforward: normal gut bacteria overwhelm and suppress the pathogen. In patients suffering from other conditions, the effects of FMT are harder to predict or to explain, and until rigorous trials are undertaken reports of spectacular recoveries are merely anecdotes, without scientific value. It's known that Crohn's patients have a gut microbiome that is less diverse than average and is lacking in key species of bacteria. But many also carry genetic mutations not found in healthy people. How such mutations interact with the immune system and gut microbes to cause disease is not fully understood.

Some of the most promising research is still at the animal stage. In a 2006 study, researchers at Washington University, in St. Louis, transferred gut microbes from mice carrying a mutation that caused them to be obese to mice lacking the mutation. The mice that received the transplants subsequently became obese themselves, despite eating the same amount of food as a group of mice that received transplants from lean donors. (Presumably the microbes in the obese mice were able

to extract more energy from food than were the microbes in their lean counterparts.) The study was the first to show that a disease trait could be transmitted from one animal to another through the microbiome.

"A lot of people my age who are moving into the field of microbiome research were really moved by that paper," Mark Smith, of OpenBiome, told me. "It's one thing to show that there are a lot of bacteria in humans, and these bacteria are associated in some cases with disease and health. But in this case the researchers changed the composition of a microbial community, and that totally changed the health of this animal. And that could potentially happen in humans."

**I**t's possible that no Americans have gut microbiomes that are truly healthy. Evidence is mounting that over the course of human history the diversity of our microbes has diminished, and, in a recent paper, Erica and Justin Sonnenburg, microbiologists at Stanford, argue that the price of microbial-species loss may be an increase in chronic illness. Unlike our genes, which have remained relatively stable, our microbiome has undergone radical changes in response to shifts in our diet, our antibiotic use, and our

increasingly sterile living environments, raising the possibility that "incompatibilities between the two could rapidly arise." In particular, the Sonnenburgs stress the adverse effects of a standard Western diet, which is notoriously light on the plant fibre that serves as fuel for gut microbes. Less fuel means fewer types of microbes and fewer of the chemical by-products that microbes produce as they ferment our food. Research in mice suggests that those by-products help reduce inflammation and regulate the immune system. Noting that rates of so-called Western diseases—including heart disease and autoimmune disorders, all of which involve inflammation—are thought to be much lower in traditional societies, the Sonnenburgs write, "It is possible that the Western microbiota is actually dysbiotic and predisposes individuals to a variety of diseases."

The first step to determining whether our ancestors' guts were healthier than our own is to figure out what might have lived in them. Jeff Leach, an anthropologist who is collaborating with the Sonnenburgs, has spent much of the past year in Tanzania, conducting research among three hundred Hadza, one of Africa's last remaining hunter-gatherer tribes. "We need to go to places where people don't have ready access to antibiotics, where people still drink water from the same sources that zebra, giraffes, and elephants drink from, and who still live outside," Leach told me. "There are a number of people like that, but only the Hadza still live in a place that gave rise to our genus, *Homo*." Based on a preliminary analysis of the tribe's stool, he said, "it looks like the Hadza have one of the most diverse gut ecosystems in the world of any population that's been studied." (A previous study led by Stephanie Schnorr, of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, found that the Hadza harbored bacterial species that had never been seen before and lacked others that in Western guts have been associated with good health.)

Among the Hadza, Leach is known as Doctor Mavi—Swahili for "shit." His own also gets collected and analyzed, in an effort to measure the impact of a Hadza life style on a Western gut. In September, Leach gave himself a fecal transplant, with the aid of a turkey baster and a bemused Hadza man, who served as his donor.

Afterward, Leach marvelled, "I probably had the most diverse ecosystem of any white person in the world."

When I spoke with him, he had been back in the United States for two days, "drinking tequila and eating hamburgers," and generating stool samples. These might show whether the microbes that he acquired from his Hadza donor could survive a Western diet or, as he predicted, would die off. If the microbes fail to take up residency in his gut, he said, "then I've effectively re-created the last ten thousand years of human history."

Leach has a daughter, now fourteen, who, as a toddler, was given a diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes, an autoimmune disease. His interest in gut microbes grew out of a desire to understand her condition. "Hadza kids are born in the dirt, play in the dirt, and they're literally chewing on animal bones," he said. "They're covered in microbes, and it's been that way for millions of years. Maybe because we've unwilded our children, that might play a role in some of the diseases we see in them."

In September, I visited a scientist in San Diego who has thought as much about the relationship between gut microbes and autoimmune disease as anyone: Larry Smarr, a computer scientist at U.C.S.D. who directs the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology. Smarr has Crohn's. More than ten years ago, in an effort to lose weight and get fit, and before he had experienced any symptoms, he began to record his every bite, step, and sleep wave. When he discovered that he could order blood and stool tests online, he started tracking those results, too—eight times a year. *The Atlantic* dubbed him "The Measured Man." The BBC aired footage of him holding a ziplock full of frozen stool.

Smarr's enthusiasm for data predates his obsession with his health; in the early nineteen-eighties, he helped persuade the National Science Foundation to fund the first national network of supercomputers, a precursor to the Internet. But it was an inadvertent discovery in a stool analysis that led to his Crohn's diagnosis and, eventually, to a new calling: as an evangelist for an impending medical revolution, "quantified health." In the future, as Smarr sees it, doctors won't have to rely on symptoms and guesswork, be-

cause they'll have computer files detailing a patient's genes and microbes. Stool is central to this vision, and Smarr is an expert on the stuff.

"As I came to realize, stool is the most information-rich material you have ever laid eyes on," he told me. Smarr is sixty-six, tall and thin, with a comic's range of facial expressions and talent for quips. We met in his fifth-floor office on campus, at a conference table overlooking a dusty eucalyptus grove. On his desk lay a small white sculpture with spiny protrusions, like a piece of bleached coral. It was a scale model of a six-inch region of Smarr's colon that is chronically inflamed by Crohn's. "It's the Rodney Dangerfield of organs and substances," he said when I admired it.

By 2008, Smarr had lost twenty pounds and become a convert to the Zone diet, a regimen that emphasizes foods containing copious amounts of Omega-3 fatty acids, which are thought to fight inflammation. (Inflammation is a normal immune response to a toxin or irritation, but chronic inflammation is a risk factor for disease.) Smarr, eager to measure the fatty acids in his blood, found a Web site that offered such a test. The site also advertised stool analyses, and impulsively he added one to his order. "At that point, I had no idea that I was anything but healthy," he recalled.

The stool test indicated that Smarr had twenty times the advisable level of lactoferrin, a marker of inflammation. Two years later, Smarr's lactoferrin had climbed to a hundred and twenty-five times the advisable level. "If you ever got something like that back, you'd fall over in a faint," he told me, his eyes wide. A search of the medical literature revealed that highly elevated lactoferrin was closely correlated with Crohn's and ulcerative colitis. But Smarr's gastroenterologist was skeptical: a colonoscopy had shown only a small area of inflammation. Besides, most patients are given the diagnosis as young adults, and, apart from a passing infection of the colon, Smarr had been largely free of symptoms. He found a new doctor, William Sandborn, a leading Crohn's researcher who had just been recruited to U.C.S.D., and underwent a second colonoscopy. He received a diagnosis of late-onset Crohn's.

The diagnosis was a relief, confirming Smarr's data. Still, if Crohn's had caused

the inflammation, what had caused the Crohn's? In 2008, he had sent a saliva sample to 23andme, the genetics testing company, and had a portion of his genome (the unique pattern of DNA in his body) sequenced. After his diagnosis, he typed "Crohn's disease" into 23andme's online database, which retrieved those snippets of his DNA associated with the illness. Smarr learned that he had DNA aberrations on a gene that several studies suggest may be a "master regulator" in Crohn's, and which, by exacerbating the immune system's inflammatory response, confers a greater than average risk for the disease.

The gene was a clue, but not everyone with a genetic predisposition gets the disease. New research pointed to the microbiome as a likely factor. So Smarr sent a stool specimen to the J. Craig Venter Institute, the genetics-research organization, where a colleague agreed to sequence his microbes—into two hundred million strings of DNA. In a typical Western gut, two phyla of bacteria are overwhelmingly dominant: Bacteroidetes and Firmicutes. Together, they comprise roughly ninety per cent of our microbes. Smarr's gut was nearly devoid of Bacteroidetes—a finding consistent with other Crohn's patients. Equally disconcerting, Smarr had abundant archaea, obscure microorganisms known for their ability to survive in harsh environments, such as the hot springs at Yellowstone National Park. "At my highest level of inflammation, I was twenty-per-cent archaea," Smarr said. "I've probably got the world's record."

Ten per cent of his bacteria were *E. coli*, a species that in healthy people is found in minute amounts, typically representing less than one per cent of the microbiome. A researcher at Smarr's lab consulted a database at the National Institutes of Health containing DNA sequences for all the *E. coli* strains that had been identified at the time—about eight hundred—and found a match for Smarr's strain. Known as "adherent-invasive *E. coli*," the strain is often found in the guts of Crohn's patients, where it digs through the mucus lining the colon and latches on to the healthy cells beneath. (Smarr: "Very sci-fi!")

Finally, he felt that he had solved much of the puzzle of his disease: "The immune system senses that there's a strain of *E. coli* that's pathogenic, so it fires up, and when the body fires up the immune system you have inflammation." Sandborn, Smarr's

doctor, called this hypothesis “very plausible.” But, he cautioned, it’s not clear whether an abnormal microbiome causes the inflammation or whether it’s the other way around.

Smarr doesn’t know what led the invasive *E. coli* to bloom in his gut. “The issue is, what do you do about it?” he told me. “How do I get my Bacteroidetes back? Given that the immune system is reacting badly to something in the microbiome, it’s sort of logical that if I could get the microbiome back to normal the immune system would calm down.” Smarr had read about fecal transplants, and in 2011 he asked Sandborn about them. At the time, no doctor at U.C.S.D. offered the procedure. When Smarr developed uncomfortable Crohn’s symptoms, Sandborn prescribed drugs, which didn’t seem to help, and eventually Smarr stopped taking them. His symptoms abated—perhaps the drugs had done some good after all—and he has been in remission for nearly a year.

Sandborn now performs fecal transplants, and Smarr says that if his symptoms return he will consider having one. “If I knew I could get five or ten years of remission out of it, I’d do it.”

Among the desperately ill, FMT’s reputation as a wonder cure has outstripped the science supporting its use. The lure of a potential remedy that is widely available, inexpensive, and considered relatively low-risk has yielded an improvisational approach to treatment and a growing D.I.Y. transplant population. When Jon Ritter agreed to serve as a donor for Tom Gravel, the Greenwich Village Crohn’s patient, Gravel paid the charges for the blood and stool screening that Ritter’s insurance didn’t cover. But these tests can cost hundreds of dollars, and many patients are circumventing the medical system altogether. On YouTube, FMT how-to videos have received thousands of views, and on Facebook there are private forums where people trade advice about the procedure. “There are a lot of people who are doing this at home,” Lawrence Brandt, of the Montefiore Medical Center, says. “Some of them are doing it under the instructions of their physicians. Some of them are doing it by reading the Internet.” One of his patients, ill with *C. difficile* and unable to find a donor, asked whether she could use her dog’s

feces. (The answer was no.) Another placed an ad in her local paper; more than forty-five people responded. Instances of FMT going terribly wrong are hard to find, although there have been anecdotal reports of people developing bacterial and viral infections following the procedure.

Like Mark Smith, of OpenBiome, the F.D.A. watched the surging demand for fecal transplants with concern. In the early nineteen-eighties, at least twenty thousand people became infected with H.I.V. after receiving blood transfusions contaminated with the virus, because doctors didn’t know to screen for it. Could a similar, as yet unknown threat be lurking in a donor’s stool? In May, 2013, agency officials convened a public workshop on FMT in Bethesda, where they explained that the F.D.A. considers stool to be a drug. This wasn’t particularly surprising. The agency defines a drug as any material that is intended for “use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease.” An exception has been written into law for body parts, including skin, bone, and cartilage, which are classified as tissue. But the statute excludes most human secretions from this category.

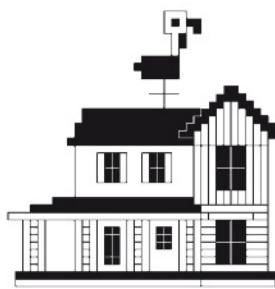
Substances labelled drugs are subject to a rigorous approval process. Pharmaceutical companies typically spend many years and millions of dollars researching and testing a drug before submitting it to the agency for approval. Until the F.D.A. approved a fecal-transplant therapy, the

detail. At the Bethesda workshop, one gastroenterologist said that it had taken her hundreds of hours to complete the paperwork. Many others lacked the resources and staff to devote to such a task. “What do we do with the fifteen thousand patients who are really desperate for something that works?” a doctor from the Mayo Clinic asked F.D.A. officials. “If your mother shows up with severe or recurrent *C. difficile*, are you going to not offer something that you know how to do safely, effectively, and say, ‘I can’t do it because the regulatory agencies in the United States have decided that this requires a special licensure?’”

At the time of the workshop, OpenBiome had not yet started its operation; the F.D.A.’s ruling implied that the organization’s plan to send stool across state lines to hospitals and clinics would be illegal. “They were planning to ship this stuff around the country,” Peter Safir, a lawyer at Covington & Burling, in Washington, D.C., who is an expert on F.D.A. regulation and has advised OpenBiome, told me. “There’s really no way around the idea that once the F.D.A. says it’s a drug you either have to have approval, which no one’s going to get in the near term, or you set up some kind of system where there’s an I.N.D.”

Six weeks later, in July, 2013, the F.D.A. declared an exception for doctors treating recurrent *C. difficile*: they would be allowed to perform fecal transplants without an I.N.D. In revising its position, the agency said that it would be exercising “enforcement discretion”—a temporary measure. As an F.D.A. spokeswoman later explained in an e-mail, the directive did not reflect a change of policy; it was intended as an acknowledgment that “there are often few or no other treatment options for these patients.” According to Safir, “What they mean is they’re not doing anything. They’re not going to go after a doctor and they’re not going to go after OpenBiome.”

That August, OpenBiome screened its first donor, and early that fall sent out its first stool treatment, to a clinic in California. In the past year, orders for OpenBiome’s stool have increased at a rate of about eighteen per cent a month. Its success has unnerved biotech companies that are developing stool-based enemas and capsules—or, as they’re known in the



procedure would be considered experimental. In order to offer it to patients, doctors would need to file an investigational new-drug application, or I.N.D., and obtain the agency’s permission. “That hit the whole field like a ton of bricks,” Smith, who attended the workshop, told me. “There was this increasing momentum around fecal transplants, and all of a sudden the whole field hit the brakes.”

I.N.D.s are intended to capture every aspect of a prospective therapy in exacting

field, “crapsules”—for eventual sale on the commercial market. “OpenBiome is selling an unapproved drug without any kind of F.D.A. clearance, so in my opinion they’re breaking the law,” Lee Jones, the C.E.O. of Rebiotix, a company in Minnesota that is developing an enema for the treatment of *C. difficile*, told me. “They may parade as a nonprofit, but what they’re doing is selling a product to be used on patients.”

When, in a year or two, Rebiotix submits its enema to the F.D.A. for approval, it will have spent tens of millions of dollars on research and trials—costs that are typically factored into a drug’s retail price. OpenBiome charges two hundred and fifty dollars for a treatment, which just covers its costs. “This is a highly unusual situation,” Peter Safir, the lawyer, said. “There’s no question that in the United States we want our drugs approved. We want the F.D.A. to say a product is safe, effective, and is manufactured according to good practices, and that costs a lot of money. But here you’ve got an almost identical competitor that is virtually giving it away, without F.D.A. approval.” Once a company like Rebiotix obtains approval to sell its stool therapy, he went on, it could pressure the F.D.A. to shut down OpenBiome.

The agency may be moving in that direction. In March, it proposed a new guideline for fecal transplants: that the stool donor should be “known to either the patient or the treating licensed health care provider.” It wasn’t immediately obvious what the agency meant by “known,” and the guideline, which was circulated for public comments, has not yet been formally adopted. Clearly, though, doctors relying on OpenBiome, whose donors are anonymous, would be unable to meet such a requirement. (“The F.D.A. is now reviewing the comments received on this draft guidance document,” an agency spokeswoman said in an e-mail.)

In an editorial in *Nature* earlier this year, Smith and two co-authors argued that stool should be reclassified as a tissue. Unlike drugs, tissues are not subject to clinical trials or to F.D.A. approval; when someone gets a bone graft, its efficacy isn’t in doubt. As Safir put it, “A tissue doesn’t require clinical trials, because you’re just substituting it for what everyone knows it already does.” Tissues are still obliged to meet strict safety standards, and Smith



and his co-authors proposed that a screening system like the one currently in place for blood, which is in a category of its own, could be adapted for stool. Classifying stool as a drug “threatens to restrict FMT mainly to companies with the resources to fund large clinical trials,” they wrote.

To amend the federal statute governing the regulation of body parts and substances would require an act of Congress, and Smith and his colleagues understand that this is unlikely to happen. “We’ve always had a view that OpenBiome might have to go away,” James Burgess, the stool bank’s executive director, told me. But he warned, “If the cost of FMT goes up by an order of magnitude, you’ll see a big jump in the D.I.Y. approach.”

Even if OpenBiome were to stop shipping stool to hospitals, it could presumably continue to operate as a resource for researchers. When I visited in October, there was a tray of shiny white capsules on Smith’s desk—“poop pills that we’ve been working on,” he explained. Doctors at Massachusetts General Hospital had just announced the results of a study showing that capsules were as effective as colonoscopes for treating *C. difficile*, and the field

was abuzz with the news, since, as Smith pointed out, “everyone would rather swallow a pill.” He had hit on a way to improve on the doctors’ methods: lining capsules with cocoa butter, which is solid at room temperature, thus insuring that they won’t disintegrate prematurely—on the shelf or in someone’s mouth.

Such research requires patients. Not only are D.I.Y. fecal transplants likely to be less safe than procedures administered by doctors but each one also represents a case lost to science. Researchers are unlikely to study Tom Gravel, the Greenwich Village Crohn’s patient, who recently cut back his fecal transplants to one every two weeks. “In a way, it is like I am a different person,” he told me, recalling the symptoms and medications that once dominated his life. He believes that he has found an effective therapy, not a cure. “Provided Jon is still up for it, which he generously seems to be, I will continue the transplants indefinitely,” he said. “Crohn’s is a very persistent disease.” ♦

ONE  
GRAM  
SHORT  
ETGAR KERET

There's an adorable waitress at the coffee shop next to my house. Benny, who works in the kitchen there, told me that her name is Shikma, that she doesn't have a boyfriend, and that she's a fan of recreational drugs. Before she started waiting tables at the coffee shop, I'd never been in the place—not once. But now you can find me perched on a chair every morning. Drinking espresso. Talking to her a little—about things I read in the paper, about the other customers, about cookies. Sometimes I even manage to make her laugh. And when she laughs it does me good. I've almost invited her to a movie a bunch of times. But a movie is just too in-your-face. A movie is one step before asking her out to dinner, or inviting her to fly off to Eilat for a weekend at the beach. Asking someone to a movie can mean only one thing; it's basically like saying, "I want you." And if she isn't interested and she says no, it all ends in unpleasantness. Because of that, asking her to smoke a joint seems better to me. At worst she'll say, "I don't smoke," and I'll make some joke about stoners, and, as if it were nothing, order another short espresso and move on.

That's why I call Avri. Avri was the only person in my high-school class who was a super heavy smoker. It's been more than two years since we spoke. I run through hypothetical small talk in my head as I dial, hunting for something I can say to him before mentioning the weed. But as soon as I ask Avri how he's doing, he says, "Dry. They closed the Lebanese border on us because of the trouble in Syria, and they closed Egypt because of all that Al Qaeda shit. There's nothing to smoke, my brother. I'm climbing the walls." I ask him what else is going on, and he answers me, even though we both know I'm not interested. He tells me that his girlfriend is pregnant, and that they both want the kid, and that his girlfriend's mother is a widow and is not only pressuring them to get married but wants a religious ceremony—because that's what his girlfriend's father would have wanted if he were still alive. I mean, try to withstand an argument like that! What can you do? Dig up the father with a backhoe and ask him?

And all the time Avri's talking I'm trying to get him to relax, telling him

that it's no big deal. Because for me it really isn't a big deal if Avri gets married in front of a rabbi or not. Even if he decides to leave the country for good or get a sex change, I'm going to take it in stride. That bud for Shikma is all that's important to me. So I throw this out there: "Dude, someone somewhere has some product, right? It's not for the high. It's for a girl. Someone special I want to impress."

"Dry," Avri says again. "I swear to you, I've even started smoking Spice, like some kind of junkie."

"I can't bring her that synthetic shit," I tell him. "It won't look good."

"I know," he mumbles from the other end of the line. "I know, but, right now, weed—there just isn't any."

Two days later, Avri calls me in the morning and tells me that he may have something, but it's complicated. I tell him I'm ready to pay for the expensive stuff. This is a onetime thing for me, and I only need a gram. "I didn't say 'expensive,'" he says, annoyed. "I said 'complicated.' Meet me in forty minutes at 46 Carlebach Street and I'll explain."

"Complicated" is not what I need at the moment. And, from what I remember back in high school, Avri's "complicated's" are complicated indeed. When it comes down to it, all I want is a single bud, even a joint, to smoke with a pretty girl who laughs at my jokes. I don't have the headspace right now for a meeting with hardened criminals, or whoever it is who lives over on Carlebach. Avri's tone on the telephone was enough to stress me out, and also he said "complicated" twice.

When I get to the address, Avri's waiting by his scooter with his helmet still on. "This guy," he says to me, panting as we climb the stairs, "the one we're headed up to see, he's a lawyer. My friend cleans his house every week, but not for money—she does it for medical marijuana. He has a bad cancer of the something—I'm not sure which part—and he's got a prescription for forty grams a month, but can barely smoke it. I asked her to ask him if he maybe wants to lighten his load a little more, and he said he'd discuss it, but insisted that two people come, I don't know why. So I picked up the phone and called you."

"Avri," I say to him, "I asked for a bud. I don't want to go to some drug

deal with a lawyer you've never met before."

"It's not a deal," Avri says. "He's just a person who requested that two of us stop by his apartment to talk. If he says something that doesn't sit right with us, we say goodbye and cut our losses. Anyway, there won't be a deal today. I don't have a shekel on me. At most, we'll know we've got things rolling."

I still don't feel good about it. Not because I think it'll be dangerous but because I'm afraid it'll be unpleasant. I just can't handle unpleasant. To sit with unfamiliar people in unfamiliar houses, with that kind of heavy atmosphere looming—it does me bad. "Nu," Avri says, "just go up, and after two minutes make like you got a text and have to run. But don't leave me hanging. He asked that two people show up. Just walk into the house with me so I don't look like an idiot, and one minute after that you can split." It still doesn't sit right, but when Avri puts it that way it's hard for me to say no without coming off like a penis.

The lawyer's last name is Corman, or at least that's what's written on the door. And the guy's actually all right. He offers us Cokes and puts a lemon wedge in each glass with some ice, like we're in a hotel bar. His apartment's all right, too: bright, and it even smells good. "Look," he says, "I've got to be in court in an hour. A civil suit over a hit-and-run involving a ten-year-old girl. The driver did barely a year in jail, and now I'm representing the parents, who are suing him for two million. He's an Arab, the guy who hit her, but from a rich family."

"Wow," Avri says, as if he had any idea what Corman is actually talking about. "But we're here about a completely different matter. We're Tina's friends. The subject we came to discuss is weed."

"It's the same subject," Corman says, impatient. "If you give me a chance to finish, you'll understand. The driver's whole family is going to come out to show their support. On the side of the dead girl, other than her parents, not a soul is going to show. And the parents are just going to sit there silently with their heads bowed, not saying a word." Avri nods and goes quiet. He still doesn't understand, but he doesn't want to aggravate Corman. "I want you and your friend here to come to court and act like you're related to the victim. Make a



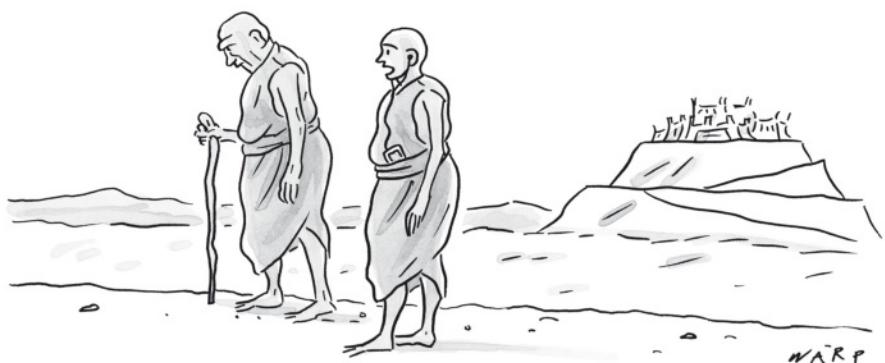
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*"Which is more ancient—our chants or 'Piano Man'?"*

• • •

ruke. Make some noise. Scream at the defendant. Call him a murderer. Maybe cry, curse a bit, but nothing racist, just 'You piece of shit' and things of that nature. In short, the judge should feel your presence. He needs to understand that there are people in this city who think this guy's getting off cheap. It may sound stupid to you, but things like that affect judges deeply. It shakes them up, shakes the mothballs out of those old, dry laws, rubs them up against the real world."

"About the weed?" Avri tries.

"I'm getting to that now," Corman says, cutting him off. "Give me that half hour in court and I'll give each of you ten grams. If you scream loud enough, maybe even fifteen. What do you say?"

"I just need a gram," I tell him. "How about you sell it to me, and we call it a day? After that, you and Avri—"

"Sell?" Corman laughs. "For money? What am I, a dealer? Maximum I give a baggie to a friend here and there as a little present."

"So give me a present," I beg. "It's a fucking gram!"

"But what did I just say?" Corman smiles an unpleasant smile. "I'll give, but first you have to prove that you're really a friend."

If it weren't for Avri, I'd never agree, but he keeps telling me that this is our chance and that it's not like we're doing something dangerous or breaking the law. Smoking dope is illegal, but screaming at an Arab who ran over a little girl—that's not only legal, it's downright normative. "Who knows?" he says. "If there

are cameras there, people might even see us on the nightly news."

"But what's the deal with pretending we're family?" I keep saying. "I mean, the girl's parents will know we're not related."

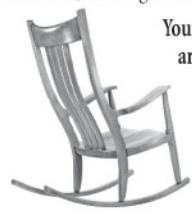
"He didn't tell us to say we're related," Avri says. "He just said that we should scream. If anyone asks, we can always say that we read about it in the paper and we're just engaged citizens."

We're having this conversation in the courthouse lobby, which is dark and smells like some mixture of sewage and mildew. And even though we go on arguing, it's long been clear to both of us that I'm already in. If I weren't, I wouldn't have ridden here with Avri on the back of his scooter. "Don't worry," he says to me. "I'll scream for us both. You don't have to do anything. Just act like you're a friend who's trying to calm me down. So long as they realize we're together."

Half the driver's family is already there, staring us down in the lobby. The driver himself is chubby and looks really young, and he greets every new person who arrives, kissing them all, like it's a wedding. At the plaintiff's table, next to Corman and another young lawyer with a beard, sit the parents of the girl. They don't look like they're at a wedding. They look wiped out. The mother is maybe fifty or older but small like a tiny bird. She has short gray hair and looks completely neurotic. The father sits there with his eyes closed. Every once in a while he opens them for a second, then closes them again.

The proceedings begin, and it seems like we've come at the end of some complicated process, and everything sounds

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kind of technical and fragmented. The lawyers just keep murmuring the numbers of different sections and articles. I try to picture Shikma and me sitting here in court after our daughter has been run over. We're destroyed, but we're supporting each other, and then she whispers in my ear, "I want that fucking murderer to pay." It's not fun to imagine, so I stop and instead I start to think about the two of us in my apartment, smoking something, and watching some National Geographic documentary about animals with the TV on mute. Somehow we start making out, and when she clings to me as we kiss I feel her chest crushed up against mine. . . .

"Hyena!" Avri jumps up in the gallery and starts yelling. "What are you smiling at? You killed a little girl. Standing there in your polo shirt like you're on a cruise—they should let you rot behind bars." A number of the driver's relatives are making their way in our direction, so I stand up and act like I'm trying to calm Avri down. In essence, I am actually trying to calm Avri down. The judge bangs his gavel and says that if Avri doesn't stop screaming the court officers will physically eject him, which at the moment sounds like a far more pleasant option than interacting with the driver's entire family, most of whom are now standing a millimetre from my face and cursing and shoving Avri.

"Terrorist!" Avri shrieks. "You deserve the death penalty." I have no idea why he says that. But one guy, with a huge mustache, gives him a slap. I try to separate them, to get between him and Avri, and I catch a head butt to the face. The court officers drag Avri out. On the way, he gets in one last "You killed a little girl. You plucked a flower. If only they'd murder your daughter, too!" By this time, I'm already on the floor on all fours. Blood runs from my nose or from my forehead—I'm not exactly sure. Just as Avri delivers the bit about the driver's daughter being killed as well, someone lands a good solid kick to my ribs.

When we get back to Corman's house, he opens his freezer, gives me a bag of frozen peas, and tells me to press hard. Avri doesn't talk to him or to me, just asks where the weed is. "Why did you say 'terrorist'?" Corman asks. "I

told you specifically not to mention that he's an Arab."

"Terrorist" isn't anti-Arab," Avri says, defensive. "It's like 'murderer.' The settlers also have terrorists."

Corman doesn't say anything to him. He just goes into the bathroom and comes out with two little plastic bags. He hands me one and throws the other to Avri, who almost fumbles the catch. "There's twenty in each one," Corman says to me as he opens the front door. "You can take the peas with you."

The next morning at the café, Shikma asks what happened to my face. I tell her it was an accident. I went to visit a friend and slipped on his kid's toy on the living-room floor. "And here I was thinking that you got beat up over a girl," Shikma says, laughing, and brings me my espresso.

"That also happens sometimes." I try to smile back. "Hang around with me long enough and you'll see me get beat up over girls and over friends and defending kittens. But it'll always be me getting beat up, never me doing the beating."

"You're just like my brother," Shikma says. "The kind of guy who tries to break up a fight and ends up getting hit."

I can feel the bag with the twenty grams rustling in my coat pocket. But instead of paying attention to it I ask her if she's had a chance to see that new movie about the astronaut whose spaceship blows up, leaving her stranded in outer space with George Clooney. She says no and asks me what that has to do with what we're talking about. "Nothing," I confess, "but it sounds pretty awesome. It's 3-D, with the glasses and everything. Do you maybe want to go see it with me?"

There's a moment of silence, and I know that after it passes the yes or the no will come. In that moment, the image pops back into my head. Shikma crying. The two of us in court, holding hands. I try to change channels, to switch to the other image, the two of us kissing on my ratty living-room couch. Try, and fail. That picture, I just can't shake it. ♦

(Translated, from the Hebrew,  
by Nathan Englander.)

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Etgar Keret on "One Gram Short."

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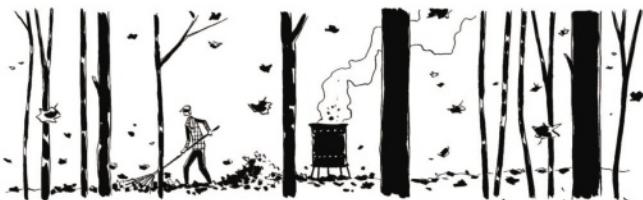
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# THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

## WHEN G.M. WAS GOOGLE

*The art of the corporate devotional.*

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

One Friday afternoon a dozen years ago, Larry Page, one of the founders of Google, posted on the wall of the office kitchen a printed-out screenshot of Google ad results, with “These Ads Suck!” scrawled on it. Google’s Ad-words engine was supposed to serve up ads that were relevant to your search terms. He was finding that if you searched for Kawasaki H1B, the vintage motorcycle, you’d get ads for lawyers who would help you with your H-1B visa. That sort of thing. By Monday morning, five engineers who weren’t even on the advertising team had, acting on their own, devised a software solution to the problem—a solution that proved to be worth billions of dollars. “It wasn’t Google’s culture that turned those five engineers into problem-solving ninjas who changed the course of the company over the weekend,” Eric Schmidt and Jonathan Rosenberg—the company’s former C.E.O. and its former head of product development, respectively—write in “How Google Works” (Grand Central). “Rather it was the culture that attracted the ninjas to the company in the first place.”

What’s Google’s secret? This is an irresistible question, because Google is the most successful new business corporation of the twenty-first century. Still only fifteen years old, it is worth about three hundred and eighty billion dollars; its revenues are more than fifty billion dollars a year, and around a quarter of that is profit. More than a billion people perform a Google search every month.

It’s natural to wonder whether there’s something each of us can do to emulate Google, with directionally similar, if perhaps more modest, results. What makes the Google model especially alluring is that, as Page and Sergey Brin put it in the statement that accompanied their initial public offering, ten years ago, “Google is not a conventional company.” Getting very rich is always fascinating, but getting very rich while proclaiming that you’re breaking the rules about how to run a business is even more so. Every publishing season seems to bring books about how to capture some of the Google magic. The new crop includes not just “How Google Works” but also “Think and Grow Digital” (McGraw-Hill), by Joris Merks-Benjaminsen, a Google executive who holds the title of Benelux Head of Branding Solutions & Innovation, and, coming soon, “Work Rules! Insights from Inside Google That Will Transform How You Live and Lead” (Twelve), by Laszlo Bock, Google’s senior vice-president of people operations.

“Think and Grow Digital” is presented as a guide for “millennials” to finding their way in the beginning and middle stages of a business career, so it’s filled with references to its intended audience’s youth and technological savvy—their “brains are different”—and to the bother of having to work with people who are middle-aged. Merks-Benjaminsen confesses that he used to see such people as “old, gray, resistant guys, stuck in their old-fashioned busi-

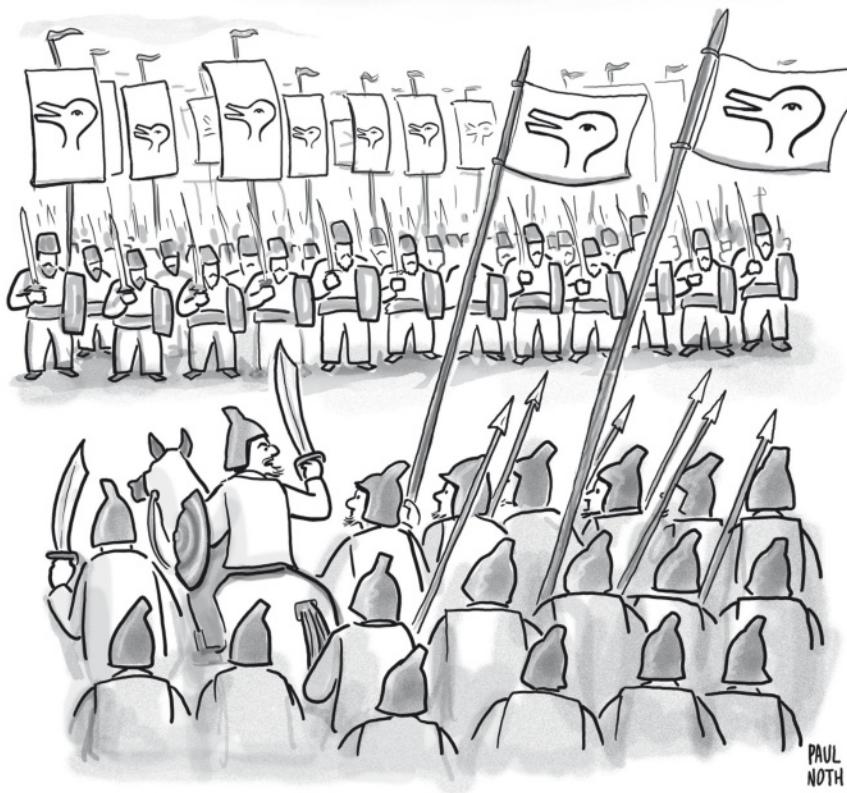
ness thinking,” but he has learned to become more compassionate: “Place yourself in the position of those who had limited access to the Internet and computers during the first 20 to 50 years of their lives and try to imagine how much new stuff they have to digest in order to understand what you are saying.” But the book is filled with maxims, slogans, charts, and other catchy ways of imparting lessons that even a non-millennial can apply. We learn Google-isms like “moonshot thinking” and “the funnel of focus.” And we get a closing proclamation: “Greatness is for everyone.”

Books like these obviously have some debt to the old and well-established tradition of American success literature; Merks-Benjaminsen’s title echoes Napoleon Hill’s 1937 “Think and Grow Rich,” which is still very much in print. And, for at least a few readers, the burnished tale of Larry Page’s scrawled protest and the “problem-solving ninjas” who dealt with it may bring to mind Elbert Hubbard’s 1899 essay “A Message to Garcia,” which for decades was an inescapable part of the national culture. Hubbard’s “preachment” took off from a possibly apocryphal incident during the Spanish-American War: the President must get a message to General Garcia, the leader of our insurgent friends, who is somewhere in the mountains of Cuba. When a fellow named Rowan is given this daunting charge, well, by God, he carries it out. He doesn’t ask why; he doesn’t ask for Garcia’s exact location; he doesn’t look for someone else who might do the task instead. Hubbard was celebrating success, and he was celebrating employees with the goodness and the gumption “to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies on a thing—‘Carry a message to Garcia.’” (Having grown up in the culturally lagging Deep South, I was raised on this sacred text. The director of my summer camp read “A Message to Garcia” to us every year, in front of a mystically flickering bonfire, and we went away properly awed.)

The inevitably inspirational character of many business books can easily take off into quasi-religious territory. “Don’t be evil” is Google’s famous mantra, and Larry Page is evidently so mesmerizing that he doesn’t even have to voice a request in order for his wishes to



*Every brilliantly successful corporation spawns books relating its success to management methods that you, too, can follow.*



*“There can be no peace until they renounce their Rabbit God and accept our Duck God.”*

• •

be granted by his employees. But such books are also grounded in real managerial aims and practices. “How Google Works,” though it’s written in a self-consciously breezy style, is in the main a serious attempt to identify Google’s distinctive way of operating. We’re told about the Friday sessions where any employee can ask Page and Brin anything, the policy of letting everyone spend twenty per cent of his or her time on a personal project, the willingness to invest in big, impracticable-seeming ideas like self-driving cars or the “interplanetary Internet.” The book’s larger argument is that the company depends on hiring what Schmidt and Rosenberg call “smart creatives,” and letting them work under circumstances that are unusual in a big company. Google likes messy, un-private offices and has a rule that all managers should have at least seven direct reports, which insures rela-

tively loose supervision. The atmosphere is meant to encourage the smart creatives (who, of course, are mainly smart, creative computer programmers, not dance critics or sculptors) to experiment constantly and obsessively, not necessarily inside the official lines of authority, and thereby to come up with new kinds of software that might turn into “great products.” The company is built to launch new products very quickly and to cut bait right away if they aren’t working. A company motto is “Ship and iterate.”

Google doesn’t stress out about work-life balance among its employees: work this meaningful and fulfilling isn’t just “work.” Almost nobody is interested in working a mere forty-hour week. When Laszlo Bock talks about what he’s learned at Google, he isn’t just giving you career advice; he’s giving you life advice. (“People look for meaning in their

work,” Bock has written. “Mission. Transparency. Voice. These three components of our culture create a virtuous cycle of attraction, community, engagement, and innovation.”) These books are corporate devotionals, generous in their use of the imperative mood. Don’t be evil. Don’t let things suck. It’s hard not to conclude that the company has it all figured out; as a glance at a quarterly report suggests, there are billions upon billions of reasons to think so.

If you imagine a very long shelf of business books with “How Google Works” at one end, you could start the other end with Alfred P. Sloan’s magisterial memoir, “My Years with General Motors,” first published half a century ago. Culturally, the two books couldn’t be more different. In Silicon Valley, a necktie is disqualifying; an informal photograph of Sloan would be one in which he’s wearing an impeccably tailored suit and tie but not a vest. Sloan refers to the intimate business associates of a lifetime as Mr. Pratt, Mr. Kettering, and Mr. Mott; for even the lowliest new hire at Google, it’s Larry and Sergey. Schmidt and Rosenberg, who occasionally refer pityingly to “incumbents”—business organizations that already existed when Google began—are proud to proclaim that Google is a “flat organization” that began with “no concept of an org chart.” Sloan finds it useful, in telling his story, to include densely detailed organization charts (including an appendix entirely made up of them).

Like Google and other big Silicon Valley companies, General Motors was, in its early days, an aggressive acquirer of small companies that looked as if they might usefully be folded into the larger business. Sloan had been running a roller-bearing manufacturer that G.M. acquired in the late nineteen-tens. G.M.’s first president was William C. Durant, a product visionary and salesman of Steve Jobsian charisma, who was incapable of coloring inside the lines. As Sloan put it, “Mr. Durant was a great man with a great weakness—he could create but not administer.” G.M.’s shareholders forced Durant out in 1910, because of his indiscriminate spending and borrowing. Durant devoted his exile to elaborately and successfully plotting his return, which he

accomplished mainly by founding Chevrolet and selling it to G.M. on terms that made him a major shareholder. He was back as president of G.M. in 1916, but out again, because of another bout of financial imprudence, in 1920. Sloan, by then the head of all of G.M.'s auto-parts businesses, became president in 1923.

Sloan's breakthrough was a memorandum he wrote in 1919 called the "Organization Study," which was meant to impose order on the company's Durant-era administrative and financial chaos. G.M. had by then grown so big that if every decision had to be made at headquarters nothing would ever get done. Sloan's solution was to create autonomous divisions organized around product lines (Chevrolet, Buick, Cadillac, and so on), each with its own president and its own budget. Headquarters would monitor performance and provide specialized services like finance and research.

The result was a quiet earthquake in the realm of big business. William Durant and Henry Ford were, in Sloan's view, "of a generation of what I might call personal types of industrialists; that is, they injected their personalities, their 'genius,' so to speak, as a subjective factor into their operations without the discipline of management by method and objective facts." Sloan believed that managing a corporation was a profession—and, as if to prove his point, General Motors quickly zoomed past Ford in market share. As early as 1927, a G.M. executive made a speech to a management association holding up the "Organization Study" as a model for all corporations. In the current atmosphere, it's easy to forget that "bureaucracy," at least for Max Weber, an early user of the word, was supposed to represent a step forward from "charisma": having rules was better than having a ruler. That was part of how G.M. worked.

For many years, management consulting meant travelling the world and teaching corporations how to be more like G.M. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., the leading historian of American business, published a book called "Strategy and Structure" (1962), which said that G.M.'s organizational form "became, more than that of any other company, the model for similar structural changes

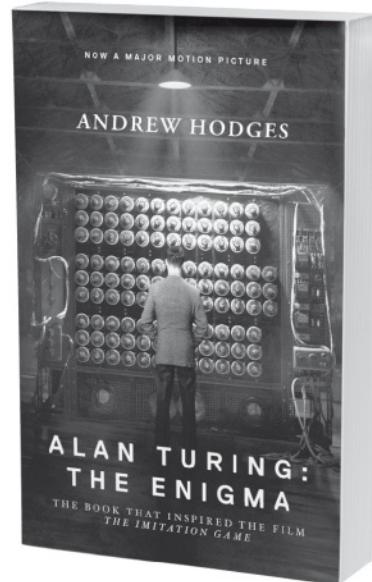
in other large American industrial enterprises." Mid-century antitrust legislation made it difficult for corporations to acquire their competitors—but, because G.M. had established the independent-division structure as the ideal form of management, corporations were inclined to grow by acquiring unrelated businesses and applying the G.M. method. And the G.M. model reached beyond business, narrowly construed. As Sloan's company became a paragon of American success, his organizational approach acquired the status of social gospel. In 1946, Peter Drucker, then in career transition from young scholar to the dominant management guru of the twentieth century, published a book about General Motors called "Concept of the Corporation," in which he called the rise of the corporation "the most important event in the recent social history of the Western world" and argued that G.M.-style decentralization "is the condition for the conversion of bigness from a social liability into a social asset."

Drucker, who had left his native Austria in time to watch the Anschluss from a safe distance, was understandably focussed on the danger of an all-powerful state; he was disposed to think that the American corporation could become a bearer of the nation's "social" functions. G.M. and many other corporations—because of government pressure, labor shortages, and unusually propitious economic conditions after the Second World War—did wind up adopting something like his model. They were heavily unionized, and they offered their white-collar employees de facto lifetime tenure. Employees got steady raises during their working years and pensions after retirement. When Sloan's book was published, he was able to report that G.M. had six hundred thousand employees, more than half of them union members.

That was G.M.: a vast number of employees, who were deployed within an archipelago of specific product lines in a way that was meant to maintain flexibility and agility, all trained and directed by professional managers to be as productive as possible, and treated as valued contributors to a larger endeavor. Year after year—for almost eight consecutive decades—G.M. was the planet's No. 1 carmaker. It was hard not to conclude, at

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The book that inspired  
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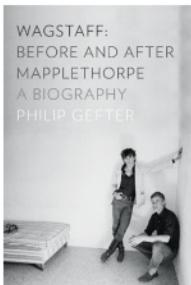
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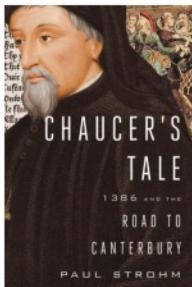
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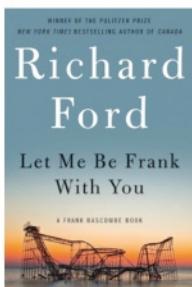
## BRIEFLY NOTED



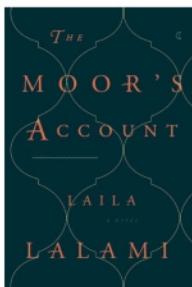
**WAGSTAFF**, by Philip Gefter (Liveright). The art collector and curator Sam Wagstaff championed minimalism in the nineteen-sixties and photography in the seventies, and is often remembered as the lover and patron of Robert Mapplethorpe. This thorough, entertaining biography portrays a blue blood who charmed East Coast society but also loved to scandalize: the uproar caused by his landmark 1964 show, "Black, White, and Gray," thrilled him. By the time he met Mapplethorpe, in 1972—Wagstaff was fifty, Mapplethorpe twenty-five—he felt that, "after minimalism, painting had nowhere to go." The relationship propelled Mapplethorpe to stardom and gave Wagstaff a last link to a glamorous world he'd helped create. Gefter captures the brilliance of that world and its decline in the face of AIDS, which killed both men.



**CHAUCER'S TALE**, by Paul Strohm (Viking). Chaucer, for much of his life, was a minor bureaucrat who at night, after work, wrote poems, which he would read to literary friends. Then, in 1386, he lost pretty much everything: his job, his apartment, his city (London), his audience. Thrown entirely onto his imagination, he even imagined an audience—a pack of pilgrims telling each other stories on the road to Canterbury. Strohm's victory-from-the-jaws-of-defeat account is touching, but the real thrill is his portrait of Chaucer's London, one square mile of church bells pealing, neighbors gossiping, politicians conniving, severed heads rotting on spikes (quite near Chaucer's windows), and poetry rising out of all this.



**LET ME BE FRANK WITH YOU**, by Richard Ford (Ecco). Ford's fourth book about the sportswriter turned real-estate agent Frank Bascombe is a quartet of novellas set in New Jersey during the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Bascombe is sixty-eight and retired. "I'm just waiting to die, or for my wife to come back from Mantoloking—whichever's first," he says. Each novella is preoccupied with loss: a former client whose house was swept away; a woman with a murderous relative; an ex-wife with Parkinson's; and an old friend dying of cancer. Bascombe remains engaging, opinionated, and keenly observant. Mortality is a recurrent theme, but so is survival. "There's something to be said for a good no-nonsense hurricane," he notes, "to bully life back into perspective."



**THE MOOR'S ACCOUNT**, by Laila Lalami (Pantheon). In this ambitious historical novel, Mustafa, a Moorish slave in the sixteenth century, recalls a failed Spanish expedition to La Florida—as Florida was then known. Mustafa, one of four survivors of a crew that originally numbered six hundred, spins an exciting tale of wild hopes, divided loyalties, and highly precarious fortunes. His account also communicates a sense of the power and the privilege of storytelling, and Lalami develops this thread with great finesse. As the narrative progresses, various characters—from celebrated healers and victorious heroes to starving prisoners—reinvent themselves through narrative, and it is a story, too, that eventually enables Mustafa to become the master of his destiny.

the height of the American century, that the company had it all figured out; as a glance at a quarterly report would demonstrate, there were billions upon billions of reasons to think so.

**G**eneral Motors went bankrupt five years ago—merely intoning its name connotes failure in the same way that intoning Google's connotes success—and its reputation had already become badly tarnished back in the seventies and eighties, when Toyota and other Japanese auto companies came out of nowhere to be significant competitors in the American market. *A God That Fails*, however, does not bring an end to the devotional genre. There are always new gods, new doctrines, and new lessons. Between G.M.'s decline and Google's ascent, there was, in computing technology, I.B.M., of course, and then Microsoft; in the industrial realm, there was, in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, the radiant example of Jack Welch's General Electric. Best-seller lists came to welcome books like Robert Slater's "Jack Welch & the G.E. Way," or Welch's own "Jack: Straight from the Gut."

Sloan's disciples revered his "Organization Study"; Welch was a devotee of the Six Sigma system, an elaborate method of reducing manufacturing defects. Welch also used most of the other leading management tools of his age, including making hundreds of acquisitions, ruthlessly eliminating the social aspects of the corporation, and orienting managers' pay toward the performance of G.E.'s stock. He drew from the package known as Total Quality Management, which had earlier transformed Japanese car manufacturing. He had other dictums, too: If you're not No. 1 or No. 2 in a market, get out of the market. Welch's wisdom was widely emulated, like Sloan's in his day, but it had the same move-like-Jagger limitations: the playbook written by the wildly successful didn't necessarily work for the rest.

For that matter, some of Google's management mantras have been in circulation for decades. Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr.'s "In Search of Excellence" (1982) offered a list of eight qualities of successful companies, none of which would be out of place in "How Google Works"—innovative culture, employee autonomy, a bias toward action,

obsession with the customer, and so on. (Some of the exemplary companies that Peters and Waterman mentioned, like Atari and Wang Labs, ran aground.) Randall Stross's "The Microsoft Way" (1996) offered a formula that was strikingly similar to Schmidt and Rosenberg's: "Gates recruited smart people, put them to work on a campus well suited for intense concentration, and maintained their allegiance with stock options whose value made millionaires of mere foot soldiers in the product-development groups. The organization, even as it grew large, was deliberately fashioned to perpetuate the identity of small groups, and communication, up and down, was frequent and voluminous." Again, market-dominant companies had plenty of managerial lessons to dispense, and these lessons had plenty of enthusiastic adherents. Drawing grand lessons from especially vivid and close-at-hand examples is always tempting. Using the corporation of the moment as a model seems so obviously right—how could it go wrong?

In 1940, a young sociologist named Robert K. Merton published an essay called "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," in which he coined the phrase "displacement of goals." Bureaucracy develops, Merton wrote, because large organizations require rules and procedures, lest they fall into the administrative and financial chaos and governance-by-whim of the kind that brought down William Durant. But eventually the rules and procedures devised to help the organization achieve its goals take on a life of their own, and become "an immediate value in the life-organization of the bureaucrat." In other words, when people orient their lives around the rules, the purpose of the organization gets lost.

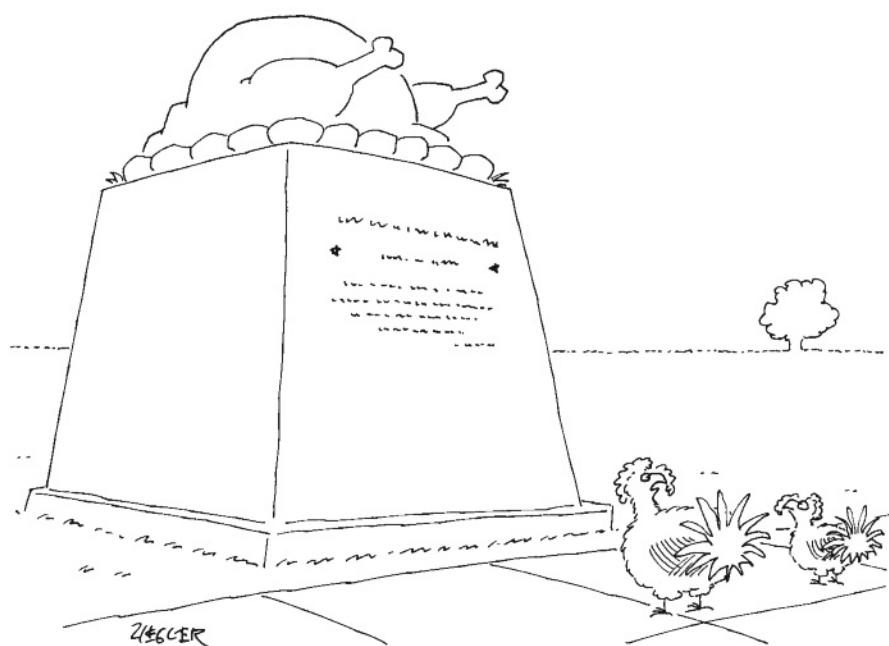
As early as 1957, in a later version of his essay, Merton reported that "bureaucracy" had become a word that nobody was using positively. Organizations in general were declining in prestige. Alfred Sloan's memoir was published just at the moment when polls began to show a growing loss of trust in American institutions, a trend that has continued for half a century. Within the realm of corporate management, the very large company divided into autonomous

divisions was under general attack by the mid-nineteen-seventies. The last half-century of management wisdom can be understood as a long series of attempts to find a way around the ineluctable logic of displacement of goals. It would be hard to find any popular business advice book since Sloan's that isn't premised on the notion that the American corporation needs to be made less sclerotic. Bureaucratic processes had become their own reward: that was goal displacement. A related shift in management since Sloan's time has been to drop the social vision of the corporation—more goal displacement—in the name of economic efficiency. This has happened in many older corporations, like G.M., which now has just over two hundred thousand employees. Google was designed never to have unions or pensions; the expectation was that most employees wouldn't plan to stay at the company for decades. Abandoning the social mission of the corporation is a management technique that's seldom openly celebrated in business books, but it has been significant.

As Merton would have predicted, though, every new strategy for reforming bureaucracy (developing "loose-tight" organizations, "flattening hierarchy," "reengineering": the formulas are countless) can itself lead to new forms of goal displacement. What managers con-

sider a problem is typically what their predecessor considered a solution. Sloan had characterized Henry Ford as a charismatic, overly personal manager, but Ford's invention of the assembly line was a breakthrough in process improvement that, with modifications, persists to this day. Sloan's multidivisional ("M-form") structure was meant to be an antidote to the very bureaucratic gumminess it was later taken to exemplify. One should be wary of the argument that any new company, no matter how brilliantly successful, has figured it out in a way that no previous company ever could have.

There are striking points of affinity between the old G.M. way and the new Google way. Among Sloan's achievements was to be more attuned to what in Silicon Valley would be called "the user" than his main rival, Ford, by offering a range of styles and prices that more closely followed the subtleties of demand than did the one-color, one-style, one-price Model T. It's notable that Page, Brin, and Schmidt are all engineers; "Google is and always will be an engineering company" is the corporate assurance. Sloan, also an engineer, declared, "General Motors is an engineering organization." Page and Brin announced, "We will not shy away from high-risk, high-reward projects because of short-term earnings pressure." Sloan,



*"Your daddy had all the trimmings, son, our nation's highest honor."*

in the “Organization Study,” wrote, “The profit resulting from any business considered abstractly, is no real measure of the merits of that particular business.” Sloan built a modern, suburban, low-slung, campuslike Technical Center that wouldn’t look out of place in Silicon Valley. He tied managers’ compensation to the performance of G.M.’s stock. He even boasted about G.M.’s “fine cafeterias.” (Add a few foosball tables and beanbag chairs, and who knows what could have happened?)

Schmidt and Rosenberg, as you’d expect, firmly disagree with Sloan’s central organization idea: “We believe in staying functionally organized—with separate departments such as engineering, products, finance, and sales reporting directly to the C.E.O.—as long as possible, because organizing around business divisions or product lines can lead to the formation of silos, which usually stifle the free flow of information and people.” Is that part of the reason that Google has become a world-bestriding colossus? Was Sloan simply wrong (and wrongly celebrated for decades), or has his big idea become inappropriate, now that we’re in what Schmidt and Rosenberg call the Internet Century?

“After the industrial revolution, the definitive twentieth-century institution became The Corporation,” Schmidt and Rosenberg write. “Think General Motors, an automobile company where mass production was happening at plants, thanks to a confluence of factors, including access to power, water, and a blue-collar labor force. Meanwhile, both union members on factory floors and white-collar workers in headquarters enjoyed safe careers and comfortable middle-class lifestyles.” Now, they write, “The Corporation as a hub of economic activity is being challenged by The Platform.” That’s the logic under which Google’s success is generalizable.

In all sorts of critical ways, however, Google’s success *isn’t* generalizable. Here’s a company that enjoys market dominance because of its intellectual property; Schmidt and Rosenberg cheerfully admit in their book that Google’s “default to open” ethos does not extend to its invaluable search and ad algorithms—revealing them, they say, might

degrade the user experience. Google does not, for the most part, make physical products; we can’t buy the self-driving car yet. Instead, it produces and distributes coded machine instructions. The nature of Google’s business explains a number of its odd-seeming practices, like its insistence on not charging users and, most of the time, on not creating the information it purveys; its preoccupation with big ideas; and its rapid and relentless introduction of new products. The main way that Google makes money is through its ad delivery system, which uses the information that Google gets about its users while they are getting information from Google to let advertisers target potential customers with an efficiency that old media could never offer. The richness of the data and the size of the network have made Google crushingly ascendant in online advertising: it harvests roughly half of all digital advertising revenue worldwide, which leaves the thousands of other companies trying to make their living from online advertising scrambling for a share of what remains.

Google’s business model explains why it has to keep its audience as large as possible—which means constantly adding more users, more information, and more search features (five hundred improvements every year, according to Schmidt and Rosenberg). It’s also why Google, like Facebook, keeps acquiring unprofitable or barely profitable startups at gasp-inducing prices: these companies have invented some application, or amassed some audience, that seems to have the potential to increase the size of the acquirer’s network significantly. As Schmidt and Rosenberg repeatedly assure us, growth and scale, not revenue, are the determining factors in the way they make decisions.

What about the emphasis on that ninja-attracting culture? That’s especially difficult to transport outside a tight radius from Mountain View. One of the ironies of the tech economy, duly noted by Schmidt and Rosenberg, is that while the products and the users are geographically untethered, the businesses that supply them are increasingly clustered in one physical location, Silicon Valley. That’s because of the unusual, and apparently non-replicable, infrastructure of support there: the Stanford engineering school, the Sand Hill Road venture-

capital firms, the angel investors, the talent pool of coders and engineers, the technical-infrastructure providers. First-rate coders are in high demand, and employers, including Google, have to deliver special working conditions and high-performing stock options in order to keep them. The ability to attract talent has a much bigger economic payoff in Silicon Valley than it does in most industries; conversely, the rest of the world is littered with the remains of attempts to create the next Silicon Valley, complete with smart creatives.

Given the psychic power of Silicon Valley at this moment, it’s possible to forget that most companies still operate in the physical world of manufacturing goods and providing in-person services. Amazon, for all its digital prowess, has warehouses filled with merchandise and employees to handle it. Google itself, which now has fifty thousand employees, can’t operate as fluidly and creatively as it used to. It has never internally developed a product as wildly successful as the mega-hits of its startup days, Page Rank and AdWords; YouTube, Google Maps, the Android operating system, and most of its other popular newer offerings are based on acquisitions. The company is an inescapably ever larger, ever more established, ever more heavily regulated organization whose management is now middle-aged. Google may be able to navigate this phase more adeptly than have some of its older Silicon Valley neighbors, like H.P. and Yahoo, but it won’t be by studying its own playbook. The idea that you can govern a company through genius leaders, genius followers, and as few rules as possible is at the heart of “How Google Works”; but, over the long haul, it isn’t how Google will be able to work. There isn’t one fix to the problem of human organization that functions in all situations at all times. Schmidt and Rosenberg end their book by claiming to find it “inspiring” that one day another, more innovative company will come along and drive Google out of business. That’s unlikely to happen in our lifetime. Being big and established confers amazing powers of survival. General Motors is still one of the world’s top companies. But the time is coming when, if Google’s C.E.O. wants to get a message to Garcia, he’ll actually have to ask someone. ♦

## JUST THE FOLKS

Edward Albee's bad marriages.

BY HILTON ALS

John Lithgow and Glenn Close as a couple in crisis in *"A Delicate Balance."*

**B**lame it on Elizabeth Taylor. Her portrayal of Martha in Mike Nichols's 1966 film adaptation of Edward Albee's 1962 early masterpiece, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", won her a Best Actress Oscar and freeze-framed what would be considered the prototypical Albee wife—"I am the Earth Mother, and you are all flops." It also made the movie, for many people, the definitive version of Albee's view of heterosexual marriage as a savage and barbaric rite of passage. But, before "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" hit the screens, this unimpeachably original playwright had already produced another of what you might call his marriage plays, the long one-act "The American Dream" (1961). (Albee's third play about marriage, "A Delicate Balance," from 1966, is currently being staged at the John Golden.)

In "The American Dream," we meet Mommy and Daddy, a rich couple, who are struggling to get Grandma off to an old people's home—and, eventually, they succeed, with the help of a hunky bodybuilder who turns Grandma on. But the play, which was inspired, in part, by Eugene Ionesco's 1950 "anti-play" about marriage and social

fakery, "The Bald Soprano," is less about what happens than about how it happens—which, in the theatre, means how it's said. Mommy and Daddy speak in rhythmic banalities. Greeting a guest named Mrs. Barker, Mommy asks, progressively, if she'd like a smoke, a drink, to cross her legs, and to remove her dress. Mrs. Barker responds to each inquiry in the same way: "I don't mind if I do." Albee is showing us the trauma of repetition: the noxious glue that holds his married couples together, despite their rage—or because of it. Daddy agrees with whatever Mommy says because he can't deal with her belittling sarcasm and judgment. He has no mind—or balls—of his own. Daddy has been emasculated, literally: he "has tubes now where he used to have tracts." His only real function in their little family is to supply the money; cash is the cushion on which Mommy's cold sentimentality and spite rest, like pointed baubles.

**L**ike his near-contemporaries and fellow gay artists the composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim and the poet James Merrill, Albee was a genius child of privilege, a sensitive boy reared in an

adult world defined by money, gothic sexiness, callousness, and neglect. He was adopted as an infant, in 1928, by a wealthy couple, Frances and Reed Albee, of Larchmont, New York. Frances was an ambitious arriviste from New Jersey; Reed was an emotionally recessive philanderer who addressed his wife as Mommy. (In the annals of the Worst Mother in Show Business, Frances is a close second to Sondheim's, nicknamed Foxy, who once told her son that her only regret in life was that she'd given birth to him.) Albee's parents paid little attention to him; he was a bourgeois prop, meant to complete their specious idea of "family." Albee never saw his adoption as a form of acceptance. It only exacerbated his sense that he was different—an observer, and not a participant. (Merrill expresses that feeling of filial isolation in a 1960 poem about his strained relationship with his mother, "Scenes of Childhood": "The son and heir! In the dark / It makes me catch my breath / And hear, from upstairs, hers— / That faintest hiss / And slither, as of life / Escaping into space, / Having led its characters / To the abyss.")

After being kicked out of boarding school, a military academy, and college, Albee found himself, at twenty-two, living in Manhattan, with no financial support from his parents. (He never saw his father again, and didn't see his mother for seventeen years.) In the bohemian Village, Albee tried to find his voice as a writer. In a sense, he already had a voice—a kind of autocratic, intolerant self-consciousness—but it took time to turn his brilliant barroom bitchiness into a more focussed and solid art. In 1953, he showed some of his poems to Thornton Wilder, who suggested that he try his hand at playwriting instead. The form allowed Albee to take control of the drama of his upbringing. And one sound rang loudest in that queer boy's imagination: his mother's complaining, disapproving voice, glittering with malice. As a writer, Albee is always in competition with that voice, but he wins, because he can do what his mother couldn't: tell the truth. And some of his greatest truth-telling is directed at the institution of marriage, whose social and moral "rightness" Mommy insisted on. In "The American Dream," Mrs. Barker describes her brother: he's "a dear man, and he has a

dear little wife, whom he loves dearly. He loves her so much he just can't get a sentence out without mentioning her. He wants everybody to know he's married. He's really a stickler on that point. . . . As far as I'm concerned, he's the chief exponent of Woman Love in this whole country." You can feel Albee almost choking in his rush to spit out the pious poison behind the words.

**A**lthough more than five years passed between the Off Broadway débüt of "The American Dream" and the première, on Broadway, of "A Delicate Balance," Mommy is still the main character, and we find ourselves, once again, in a room dominated by her voice and her self-conferred grandeur. But, instead of the abstract "theatre" space that makes up the set of "The American Dream"—footlights, a couple of chairs—"A Delicate Balance" opens in a "large and well-appointed suburban house." (If you want to chart Albee's progression, between the two works, from semi-didactic absurdism to heightened realism, read the descriptions of his characters' homes, which he fills with more and more details: books, pillows, hallways, the better for people to hide or argue in. The one constant throughout is liquor.)

Tobias (John Lithgow) is in the library, searching through a shelf of cordials for a bit of after-dinner relaxation, when we first meet him and his wife, Agnes (Glenn Close), who is musing about her life, her potential future:

AGNES: What I find most astonishing—aside from that belief of mine, which never ceases to surprise me by the very fact of its surprising lack of unpleasantness, the belief that I might very easily—as they say—lose my mind one day, not that I suspect I am about to, or am even . . . nearby . . .

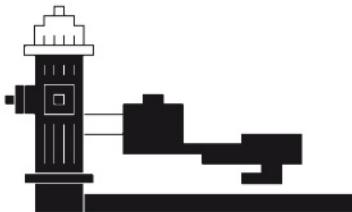
TOBIAS: There is no saner woman on earth, Agnes.

AGNES: . . . for I'm not that sort; merely that it is not beyond . . . happening: some gentle loosening of the moorings sending the balloon adrift—and I think that is the only outweighing thing: adrift; the . . . becoming a stranger in . . . the world, quite . . . uninvolved, for I never see it as violent, only a drifting.

Agnes is a queen of pauses. The physical thrill I felt when I first read those words, as a teen-ager, convinced me that, along with Tennessee Williams, Albee was one of America's greatest living playwrights—though I'm reluctant to pin that smoochy moniker on him, as he made fun of such pronouncements in

"Fam and Yam," his 1960 comedy about playwrights. Unlike Williams, whose work is rooted in the magnified cadences of Southern speech, Albee finds meaning in an elegant pileup of sounds that are an object lesson in personal style.

But that isn't enough for Albee, who has a Puritan streak a mile wide: Agnes must have a reason for existing, let alone for speculating on her sanity—or else



what's the point? In a 1996 preface to the play, Albee wrote:

The play concerns . . . the rigidity and ultimate paralysis which afflicts those who settle in too easily, waking up one day to discover that all the choices they have avoided no longer give them any freedom of choice, and that what choices they do have left are beside the point.

So what choices have Agnes and Tobias made or avoided? Tobias is a case study in passive-aggression, while Agnes sees the world as a straight line that there's no sense getting wobbly on. Anyone who insists that the world is crooked or incomplete is crooked or incomplete himself. Together, these two bear up under the kind of marriage that Sondheim described in his fabulous 1970 musical, "Company":

It's the little things you share together,  
Swear together,  
Wear together  
That make perfect relationships.  
The concerts you enjoy together,  
Neighbors you annoy together,  
Children you destroy together  
That keep marriage intact.

Years ago, however, there was a time when Agnes and Tobias's power issues were tangled, reversed. As a young couple, they lost their only son, Teddy. (Teddy is one of many dead or imagined or longed-for boy children in Albee's work.) They already had a daughter, the quarrelsome Julia (Martha Plimpton), but when Agnes wanted to try for another child after Teddy's death Tobias refused to inseminate her. As Agnes recalls:

AGNES: When Teddy died? We *could* have had another son; we could have tried. But no . . . those months—or was it a year?

TOBIAS: No more of this!

AGNES: . . . I think it was a year, when you spilled yourself on my belly, sir? "Please? Please, Tobias?" No, you wouldn't even say it out loud. I don't want another child, another loss. "Please? Please, Tobias?" And guiding you, *trying* to hold you in?

TOBIAS: Oh, Agnes! Please!

AGNES: "Don't leave me then, like that. Not again, Tobias. Please? I can take care of it: we won't have another child, but please don't . . . leave me like that." Such . . . silent . . . sad, disgusted . . . love.

Like Mommy, in "The American Dream"—indeed, like many of Albee's women—Agnes is the more sexually graphic and thus avaricious of the two, and Tobias, like Daddy, is reduced to a walking dildo. He rarely speaks until he's forced to respond. When Martha, in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," tells her husband, George, that she had to wear the pants in her family because no one else would, she could be speaking for Agnes, too. But whereas Martha is an alcoholic, Agnes chooses to be morally superior; it puts her at the center of everything, including her sister Claire's need for drama. Claire (Lindsay Duncan), who lives with Agnes and Tobias, is a sad, funny, brazen "little girl" who never grew up, a drunk who never wants to come down and face the memory of the affairs that it is suggested she had with Tobias and with his friend Harry (Bob Balaban), or the fact that she's a deeply intelligent woman who hasn't found an outlet for her lively wit. Claire speaks the way we all wish we could speak when sober, never mind drunk: she doesn't miss a verbal trick or a turn of her own imagination. Alone onstage with Tobias for the first time, she proposes that he get a gun and shoot all the women in his life. Tobias asks if she really wants him to shoot her. "I want you to shoot Agnes first. Then I'll think about it," Claire replies, adding, "Unless you kill Agnes . . . how will I ever know whether I want to live?"

She has a point. How do any of the characters know they're alive? They never go out into the world. But then it comes to them. Near the end of the first act, Harry shows up with his wife, Edna (Clare Higgins), catching Agnes, Tobias, and Claire by surprise. After a bit of dissembling, Harry and Edna admit to being frightened. But of what? They were sitting at home, Harry says, doing this and that, and suddenly they were just . . . frightened.

They had to find a place where they felt safe, loved, and so they ended up with Agnes and Tobias, their best friends. It's an incredible conceit: What if we all had to be responsible for our friends at a moment's notice? How prepared are we to love, in the true, full sense of the word? At first, Harry and Edna seem as absurd as Mrs. Barker, in "The American Dream," but by the time Albee wrote "A Delicate Balance" he had evolved enough to add pathos to the ridiculousness. The scared couple's vulnerability also serves to underscore the other big question that Albee asks in this masterly play: What, besides cohabitation, makes a marriage?

None of the characters can answer this question, because, despite their staid appearance, they're all unsettled, searching, discontent, thick with secrets. That's what makes Albee's inventions so profoundly naturalistic: his characters have no solutions. When he mars "A Delicate Balance" with a dénouement that doesn't mean much, you ignore your disappointment on account of all the brilliance that came before—the play's spiky beauty, and its unforgiving critique of a pre-feminist world in which women have the strength but refuse to go it alone, because they're afraid to give up the comforts of the club, the safety of home.

In an extraordinary performance, Clare Higgins listens to the emotion that's built into her role, the fear and the loathing and the embarrassment that Edna feels, shivering a little in her fur coat, beside her small and slight—in every sense of the word—husband. Lindsay Duncan is fascinating to watch in a different way; she doesn't pull you into the part as Higgins does, but, rather, charms you into believing Claire, because that's what Claire is: charming. (Drunks often have to be charming in order to make new friends, because they're always losing the old ones.) Albee's precise words release something in Duncan, whose physical play onstage—she's always moving, never standing completely upright—makes us delight in the language that much more. Albee is a writer who likes to comment on his writing as it's happening, on the technique that goes into making words rise and fall. (In "The American Dream," for instance, when Grandma complains about aging Mommy chimes in with

"Homilies; homilies!") Duncan keeps the pronouncements and the commentary in her mind, simultaneously.

But the spark of Duncan's performance gets blotted out when we stop to think about what Close, Lithgow, Plimpton, and Balaban are doing up there. It certainly doesn't have anything to do with being part of an ensemble. Close's Agnes is a dry doyenne in overdone Laura Ashley. (The unimaginative and sometimes awkward costuming is by Ann Roth. Given their social class, I very much doubt that Claire and Julia would run around barefoot, as they do in the final act. The ladies' wigs are also distractingly bad.) Close has that patrician air we loved in films like "The World According to Garp" and "Reversal of Fortune," but the director, Pam MacKinnon—who did an amazing job of drawing out the sexuality in George and Martha's marriage, in the 2012 Broadway revival of "Virginia Woolf"—has her speak so fast that we can't hear the transitions in her thoughts and feelings. She's a tranny's idea of a stern older woman. Her ferocity is all on the outside, with no internal reality driving it. Close seems comfortable only when Agnes is exchanging insults with Claire. She can't match Duncan's power, so she hides her intelligence behind something easier, less nuanced, to gain the audience's sympathy.

This leaves the never less than empathy-inducing Lithgow up a creek with only a small bent spoon to paddle with; he's the kind of actor who needs a partner to take him somewhere, a sensitive guy who depends on a sensitivity that Close doesn't provide. Meanwhile, all Plimpton is interested in is standing center stage and braying, while Balaban does his usual bleating-sheep-about-to-be-sheared thing. The alienation that these performers evoke is not the alienation of Albee's world, with its high talk and its Episcopalian doubt, but the chilly defensiveness of actors standing onstage, for the most part, alone together. Still, nothing can detract from the purity and force of Albee's writing, which should be heard live, because what he wants is to make us electric with the experience of speech as it was imprinted on him as a boy—a boy who grew into a man who spat on the grave of his parents' marriage, then laid the flowers of his vengeful talent on top of it. ♦

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# THE SOUND OF SWEDEN

*Who rules the pop charts? Swedes.*

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES



**D**o you like Swedish pop music? The answer is probably yes, even if you can't name a single artist born in Sweden. Do you like Katy Perry's "Hot N Cold"? Pink's "Please Don't Leave Me"? Kelly Clarkson's "Since U Been Gone"? Many of the songs on the new Taylor Swift album, "1989," half of which were co-written by Max Martin, a Swede? "1989" sold almost 1.3 million copies in its first week, the biggest week for an album since "The Eminem Show," in 2002. Swift's album is a big moment for the musical influence of Sweden, but new albums by the Stockholm residents Tove Lo and Mapei reinforce the fact that the Swedish sound

may now be the reigning pop language everywhere.

The first Swedes to dominate the charts were the group ABBA, in the nineteen-seventies. They were followed by the brief but intense reign of Ace of Base, in the early nineties. Today, Martin, who started as the singer in a hair-metal band called It's Alive before moving into songwriting, can be credited with either writing or influencing a large proportion of the Swedish pop produced in the past twenty years. He and his cohort of songwriters are backstage workers, who write mostly for, and with, others, a version of the classic assembly-line songwriting model that has

*Tove Lo's songs are of the moment: simple, spare, electronic, and unfussy.*

served artists as disparate as Frank Sinatra, George Jones, and Whitney Houston. (This team process does not diminish Martin's individual fame in Sweden, where he will soon appear on a postage stamp.) As Taylor Swift shows, Swedish pop doesn't need actual Swedes singing it.

Martin had his first impact in the U.S. in 1997, with the Backstreet Boys' hit "Quit Playing Games (with My Heart)." He also worked with a teenager from Sweden named Robyn, whose débüt album, "Robyn Is Here," yielded two top-ten hits. He then turned his attention to another boy band of the nineties, 'N Sync, and to a former Mouseketeer named Britney Spears. Martin's most enduring legacy, still, is his work on Spears's biggest and best-known hits, such as "... Baby One More Time" and "Oops! ... I Did It Again."

In 2004, Martin teamed up with a New York musician named Lukasz Gottwald, professionally known as Dr. Luke, and changed his approach. The two pushed a heavy sound that reclaimed the feel of guitar-pop bands like Cheap Trick, and gave big hooks and loud guitars to female solo artists like Clarkson and Perry. In the past few years, Martin has worked with another longtime collaborator, Shellback, who's also a Swede; together, they produced much of Swift's "1989." Martin's choruses rarely feel overwrought or lyrically complex—they hang back at first, before leaping up the scale, high enough to excite but not so melodramatic that they invoke opera or hair metal. Think "Hot N Cold," "... Baby One More Time," "Teenage Dream," "I Want It That Way." Sounds natural, but it couldn't be harder.

Both Stockholm and Nashville are hubs for professional songwriters and producers, and Swift was signed as a writer in Nashville when she was fourteen. In an uncynical way, both Swedish and Nashville pop exploit the pleasures of the process. The fan expects certain constants—short songs, bright sounds, hopeful surges—and also wants some unexpected moments, which is where the personality of the artist comes in.

Swift, as has been widely noted, supposedly left the country demographic to make "1989," which she calls her "first documented, official pop album." But

Swift had already made a really good pop album, in 2012—"Red," which featured the help of Martin and Shellback on three tracks, including the near-perfect kiss-off "We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together." "Red" was Swift's pop coming out; "1989" is more like "Now That's What I Call Swift!," a satisfying compendium of expert, bright, familiar pop that captures Swift's ebullience but loses the distinguishing parts of her personality amid all the variations. Swift has a brand as familiar and visible as the Batman signal. It takes a lot of noise to blanket that signal, but "1989" somehow does that. Many of its songs could have been written for other people, and that's the real first for Swift here, not any alleged move from one style to another.

**T**ove Lo, whose débüt album, "Queen of the Clouds," was released in September, is less well known but more current. Though Swift single-handedly generates a frightening percentage of the money still being made in the music business, she somehow ended up with an older version of Swedish pop. Lo has written hits for others, including Cher Lloyd, and for Lo's former bandmate, Caroline Hjelt, one half of Icona Pop. She's also a member of Martin and Shellback's songwriting collective, Wolf Cousins. Lo's records, though, feature the work of only her team, not of her mentors.

Her sound is of the moment: simple, electronic, and unfussy. Her style is of a piece with that of a loose group of artists, like Lorde and Lykke Li, who feel naturally rooted in the digital and the spare. (Lo also cites Robyn as an inspiration; both went to the Rytmus Music School, in Stockholm.) Lo comes across as a hedonist who refuses to devolve into chaos. Her current hit, "Habits (Stay High)," is about doing drugs to forget an ex. But she's not flogging a tired rewrite of the rock-star script. She eats dinner in the bath, goes to sex clubs to distract herself, and tries, like millions before her, "to keep you off my mind." "Habits (Stay High)" is about a self-destructive lapse, but "Moments" presents a different kind of transgression: Lo confesses that she's a catch. She sings, "I have my moments ... I am charming as fuck." It's concrete, blunt. She likes her

own pleasure, without feeling the need to apologize for it or to tie it to some phony theory of transcendence.

Unlike many artists I've talked to, Lo admits that Swedish pop has specific characteristics. She told me that it has "clear but simple lyrics, a lot about the melody, and also having a little bit of melancholy or a darker sense to it, to not make it too sugary or too bubblegum." Three parts formula, one part character.

A trickier version of Swedepop can be heard on "Hey Hey," the débüt album by Mapei, a Liberian-American woman, born Jacqueline Mapei Cummings, who grew up in Stockholm and moved to Brooklyn when she was eighteen. After beginning as a rapper, Mapei released one of my favorite pop singles of 2013, "Don't Wait," co-written by Magnus Lidehäll, a rising post-Martin Swedish writer and producer. The song presents a circular acoustic-guitar figure with the brittle tone of the koto, a Japanese stringed instrument, and then takes it away. The song is built largely from finger snaps and a quiet kick drum, letting instruments enter for only seconds at a time. It's openly romantic, and the unchecked sentiment is balanced by the dignified frame of the backing track. Mapei sings the verses slowly, allowing plenty of gaps, and leaves the big plea until the brief but impassioned chorus: "Don't wait till I do wrong, don't wait till I put up a fight. You won my heart, without a question, don't wait for life."

In keeping with Lo's description of the ideal Swedish pop song, "Don't Wait" sounds pleasantly haunted and crackly, the opposite of sappy. One shaft of sunlight has a greater impact than an allergy ad's worth of blue skies.

The rest of "Hey Hey" zooms through a nervous clutch of styles: slower songs for an older demographic; the kind of revised American soul that fuelled both Adele and Amy Winehouse; some orphaned rap and loud guitars. In person, when she opened for Lykke Li at Radio City Music Hall in October, Mapei was confident and full-voiced, even though she hasn't made up her mind about her persona. If "1989" is the entirely effective work of many professionals, "Hey Hey" is the beginning of a career. It doesn't matter if Mapei has some stumbles as long as she keeps a place in Stockholm. ♦

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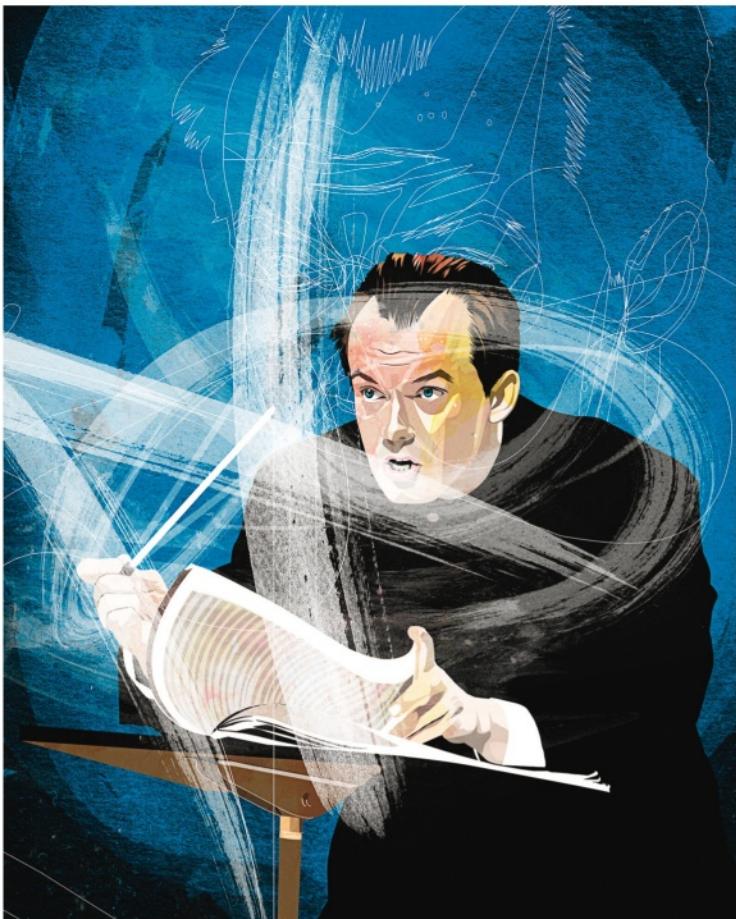
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## BRUSHFIRES

*Andris Nelsons energizes the Boston Symphony.*

BY ALEX ROSS



“There is a point in the perfection of artistic skills beyond which further progress is without artistic value,” the composer and critic Virgil Thomson wrote of the Boston Symphony, in 1944. “The surface becomes so shiny that nothing else can be perceived.” These sentences appear in a new Library of America edition of Thomson’s writings, edited by Tim Page. As a critic, Thomson was high-handed, waspish, not infrequently compromised by conflicts of interest. At his best, though, he was surgically acute, and never cut sharper than when he addressed the American cult of orchestral precision. The Boston Symphony is “overtrained,” he says, its punctiliousness

leading to “executional hypertrophy.” Phrases are so polished that they become inert; narrative dissolves into immaculate moments. “The music it plays never seems to be about anything, except how beautifully the Boston Symphony Orchestra can play.” Also, Thomson complained, the orchestra was too loud, simulating a “Niagara Falls of sound.”

If Thomson were to hear today’s orchestras—he died in 1989, at the age of ninety-two—he might well feel vindicated. Boston Symphony recordings from the nineteen-thirties and forties sound positively loosey-goosey in comparison with the technical standard that now prevails at top-tier ensembles. In

*On the podium, Nelsons, a galvanic young Latvian, lunges about uninhibitedly.*

the first minute of a 1938 rendition of Beethoven’s Ninth, under Serge Koussevitzky, the strings and the timpani struggle to fall in sync; these days, such a lusty but messy performance would occasion much head-shaking. And orchestras keep getting louder, to the point where earplugs are routinely distributed backstage. The conjoining of power and precision is awesome to witness, and it occasions justifiable professional pride. Yet, as Thomson suggested, it can become an end in itself, an unrealistically perfect distortion of the music it is meant to convey.

These glorious machines need leaders who can impart a sense of mission and drive. Arguably, Boston has lacked such a figure since 1949, when Koussevitzky, an imperious new-music advocate, departed. Ten years ago, James Levine came to town with a host of ideas; sadly, he never committed himself fully to the orchestra, and medical problems cut short his tenure. In September, a successor to Levine arrived, in the form of the thirty-six-year-old Latvian conductor Andris Nelsons. I saw three of Nelsons’s concerts this fall, including a débüt gala. He is a galvanic presence, and has the orchestra playing in wide-awake fashion. But he has not disclosed a grander vision, beyond fiery renditions of late-Romantic and early-modern repertory, and rumors that the Berlin Philharmonic is considering him as a possible music director have Bostonians feeling nervous. Thomson might see a problem not yet solved—although, as problems go, it is a gorgeous one.

Tall, gawky, bright-eyed, Nelsons ascends the podium looking like an overgrown boy who has been given an orchestra for his birthday. He assumed the directorship of the Latvian National Opera while still in his mid-twenties, and took the helm of the City of Birmingham Symphony in 2008, at the age of twenty-nine. A former martial-arts student, Nelsons lunges about uninhibitedly, violating textbook rules about the wisdom of minimizing one’s gestures. I imagine that Boston players have already mastered imitations of his signature moves: the Backward Lean, the Extreme Crouch, the Trapeze Grab, the Across-the-Table Ice-Cream Scoop.

As with the calisthenics of Leonard Bernstein, Nelsons’s gestures have a prac-

tical purpose: they impinge upon the peripheral vision of players whose eyes are fixed on their parts. This beat will not be overlooked. And Nelsons's sweat-drenched physicality, not to mention his reportedly avid, affable way of running a rehearsal, invites an extra measure of involvement from the musicians. Every time I've seen him conduct—in Boston, Tanglewood, New York, and Bayreuth—he has set off brushfires of intensity. This fall, the Nelsons effect was most evident toward the end of two familiar scores: in the accelerating crescendo into the finale of Sibelius's Second Symphony, which had the kind of unchecked passion one usually hears only on early-twentieth-century recordings; and in the "Danse Sacrale" of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," which hurtled forward even as individual figures jumped spastically in place.

Significantly, these climaxes were achieved not simply by way of loudness. I recall Levine making a bigger noise when he led the "Rite" in Boston a decade ago. Nelsons produces full-body impact: instead of shattering about your ears, the sound engulfs you. He is a master at controlling dynamics to create a kinetic, fluctuating mass. In the section marked "Poco largamente," in the first movement of the Sibelius, there is a mighty surge, topped by a high, aching line in the violins, cellos, flutes, and bassoons. Yet Sibelius specifies a "poco f" dynamic, meaning that it should be slightly softer than the peak of the preceding crescendo. In the Koussevitzky recording I grew up on, the effect passes unnoticed amid the general excitement. Osmo Vänskä, in his icily potent readings, tends to reel back suddenly at the Poco largamente, as if to conserve power. Nelsons, applying a ritardando as well as a diminuendo, generates a sense of redoubled passion, even as the sound recedes—a drawn-out, sobbing cry. His co-conspirator is Boston's Symphony Hall, with its wraparound resonance; acousticians have yet to devise a finer place to hear an orchestra. (In December, the orchestra's BSO Classics label will release a recording drawn from the Sibelius performances.)

Nelsons's vigorous shaping of phrases has its drawbacks. It can result in performances that seem fitful and over-inflected, as when a stage actor invests each line with so much deep meaning that he begins to wear us out. The second movement of the Sibelius had too

many wrenching contrasts, and a couple of oddly prolonged pauses sapped the momentum. At the opening-night gala, Wagner's "Tannhäuser" Overture resembled a magnificent, overweight bird that was failing to get off the ground. The "Rite of Spring" unfolded in largely straight-ahead fashion, but in places Nelsons was too heavy-handed, dragging out, for example, the trombone glissandos in "Spring Rounds," so that each felt like the last in a series. I suspect that the give-and-take between orchestra and conductor will settle over time, particularly if Nelsons chooses to be a little more sparing in his exhortations.

Although Nelsons is most at home in the 1850-to-1950 period, his first Boston season shows him open to newer music: five of his programs include works by living composers. Earlier this month, he led Sofia Gubaidulina's "Offertorium," a 1980 masterpiece for violin and orchestra, and "Dramatis personae," an almost new trumpet concerto by Brett Dean. The Gubaidulina has a history in Boston, having been performed there in 1988, as part of a twilight festival of Soviet music. (I attended some events in that series, and remember the sight of Gubaidulina and Alfred Schnittke blinking uncertainly in the glare of the Western media.) The young Latvian violinist Baiba Skride, her bow arm violently strong, gave an arresting, at times overstrenuous account of the solo part; Nelsons delivered a rendition more episodic than continuous. The Dean, too, meandered, though in that case the fault seemed mainly the composer's.

What Boston requires most from this hugely gifted, still maturing conductor is his full attention. Many European organizations, including the Lucerne Festival, want a piece of him, yet Boston operates on a year-round schedule, with its summertime residency at Tanglewood, in the Berkshires, central to its creative identity. Nelsons will lead six Tanglewood concerts next year, but in 2016 he is slated to conduct "Parsifal" in Bayreuth—a demanding, summer-long commitment. Too often, frequent-flier maestros come across as frazzled business travellers, their minds perpetually racing ahead to the next date. It's time for conductors to make the revolutionary gesture of staying home, with the orchestras that work to realize their vision. ♦

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## KEEPING SECRETS

*"The Imitation Game" and "The Babadook."*

BY ANTHONY LANE

Nobody knows who first compared Benedict Cumberbatch to Sid the sloth, from *"Ice Age,"* but, the more you inspect the resemblance, the better it gets. Ever the good sport, Cumberbatch has owned up to it, conceding that his head is a peculiar shape. Ever the canny star, he may also realize that a mixture of ice and sloth is no bad thing. What is it that view-

of Bletchley was overgrown; the brambles of official secrecy thrive especially well in Britain. Now we know almost too much. Bletchley, where the Allies deciphered enemy communications, has become a museum; you can tour the hut, recently restored, in which Turing and his colleagues toiled. His life has been probed onstage—Derek Jacobi played him in



Benedict Cumberbatch plays Alan Turing in a film directed by Morten Tyldum.

ers of the BBC's *"Sherlock"* have come to love about his Holmes if not a musing languor, touched with severe frost? That is a tribute to Conan Doyle, of course, and Cumberbatch treats the present day as if it were period drama. In truth, he seems at ease in any period, molding himself into an eminent Edwardian, in *"Parade's End,"* a smooth and plausible William Pitt, in *"Amazing Grace,"* and a contented bringer of twenty-third-century mayhem, in *"Star Trek: Into Darkness."*

And so to the outbreak of the Second World War, in *"The Imitation Game,"* and to the arrival of Alan Turing (Cumberbatch) at Bletchley Park, in Buckinghamshire. For decades, the name of Turing was familiar only to mathematicians and historians of computing, while that

*"Breaking the Code"* (1986), in London and on Broadway—and subjected to the rummaging of biographers. When Barack Obama addressed Parliament, in 2011, the three British scientists he lauded were Newton, Darwin, and Turing, and the centenary of Turing's birth, in 2012, ignited a year of celebrations. His head was on a stamp.

*"The Imitation Game"* is directed by Morten Tyldum and adapted by Graham Moore from *"Alan Turing: The Enigma,"* Andrew Hodges's detailed study from 1983. Hodges was neither the first nor the last to leap with glee upon that final word. Enigma was the name of the German cipher machine, which encoded messages dispatched to the armed forces. The breaking of those codes, widely con-

sidered impossible, was achieved in part—or, if you believe this movie, pretty much solely—by Turing, who designed his own machine, a thing of great beauty and ingenuity known as a Bombe, to quicken his task. Turing was also gay, at a time when homosexual acts were a criminal offense. After the war, in 1952, he was arrested for indecency, convicted, and offered “chemical castration” instead of prison. He took the former.

There are swaths of material here, and Tyldum and Moore have fashioned something as sturdy, as tweedy, and as serviceable as the jackets sported by their hero. Of the bitter whimsy that poked through *"Headhunters,"* Tyldum's previous film, no trace remains, and any caprice is reserved for the choice of what is left in, left out of, or tacked onto the story. Enigma wonks, who have already endured a 2001 thriller set at Bletchley and entitled, yes, *"Enigma,"* will suffer anew. No word is breathed, for instance, of the Polish cryptographers who did much of the heavy lifting on the project before Turing came on the scene. A spy who passed information from Bletchley to the Soviets is placed in Turing's hut, whereas, in fact, the two men may not even have met. As for the cracking of codes, it is shrunk to a single, Oh-my-God epiphany, triggered by a comment in a pub, and feted with a barrage of music-boosted hugs among Turing and his team. I am not sure what is more galling, the willful misreading of British mores or the falsification of science.

You could argue, rightly, that movies aren't made for wonks. Still, it's hard to justify the blank space where Turing's end should be. He died of cyanide poisoning; a half-eaten apple was found beside his bed; and he had long been fascinated by *"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."* How could a movie director, of all people, not make something of that? Tyldum builds up to it, with scenes of Turing messing about with cyanide and handing out apples at work, but the payoff is missing. Here, in short, is a film about a highly intelligent homosexual mathematician that shows no homosexual behavior, almost no math, and a faltering faith in the intelligence of its viewers. So, what is there to tempt us?

In a word, actors. Alex Lawther, who plays Turing in flashbacks to his boarding school, has the delicate task of exuding a furrowed cleverness without being

a pain in the neck, and fulfills it with distinction. The role of Turing's boss is assigned to Charles Dance, who seems ever more Rathbone-like in his taste for verbal jousting. He also gets to unleash his inner Trump, declaring, "Alan Turing, you're fired" (to no avail). In his grasp of wartime briskness, Dance is rivaled by Keira Knightley, who, as David Cronenberg found in "A Dangerous Method," yields less as a free or flighty spirit than she does as a semi-suppressed one. She may be too glamorous for the part of Joan Clarke, whose mathematical brain led her to the heart of Bletchley, but her undorned "Oh," or, rather, "Eauw," when the gravity of the job is first explained to her, takes us straight back to "Brief Encounter" and made me dream, long after "The Imitation Game" had finished, of what Noël Coward would have done with so tangled a tale.

Cumberbatch is quite at home in this environment—if anything, too much so. Thwartings and stutters, plus powers of reason so strong that they disconnect the thinker from an often unreasonable world: he can manage that standing on his Sid-like head. Turing will survive this film with his enigma intact, but the movie itself is the opposite of enigmatic, and Cumberbatch merits more. His template should be James Mason, another leading Englishman with oodles of dash and a seducer's fondant croon; when we record Mason's monuments, we think of "A Star Is Born," "Bigger Than Life," "The Reckless Moment," "North by Northwest," and "Lolita"—or, if you prefer, of what he did for George Cukor, Nicholas Ray, Max Ophüls, Hitchcock, and Kubrick, and of what they saw and

discomforted in him. That is why Cumberbatch should knock on Cronenberg's door, or call up Paul Thomas Anderson. As for Michael Haneke, imagine what games—funny games, not imitation ones—he could play with Cumberbatch's poise and charm. An actor of his breed requires major directors, and their risky witchcraft: the ones who would proffer him the apple, and dare him to bite.

**L**et a law be passed, requiring all horror films to be made by female directors. It would curb so many antiquated tropes: the use of young women, say, underdressed or not dressed at all, who are barely fleshed out as characters before that flesh is coveted, wounded, or worse. Beyond that, the law would restore horror to its rightful place as a chamber of secrets, ripe for emotional inquisition. Such thoughts are prompted by "The Babadook," a fine new Australian film, written and directed by Jennifer Kent. This is about a woman in peril, yet it has no truck with the notion that she is a mere victim. At times, indeed, the peril seems to be, if not her fault, at least of her own making. Is she the sum of all fears, or the root of them?

Amelia (Essie Davis) is a widow, living in a small and ill-lit house with Samuel (Noah Wiseman), her only child. He is unmanageable, but, then, his origins were dire; his father was killed in a car crash, nearly seven years ago, as he drove Amelia, who was in labor with Samuel, to the hospital. Now it's just the two of them, although they are soon joined by an unexpected third. The Babadook is towering and dark; he looms taller as you look at him, like an unhappy

memory that swells in the traumatized mind. He wears a top hat, like the Artful Dodger, and his hands could be a child's drawing of hands—a splay of simple spikes. He cleaves to what we ask of our monsters, that they be both amorphous and acute: oozy hard to pin down, but manifestly there, like a knife against the throat. His name has a nice Australian tang; Aboriginal legend tells of a frog called the Tiddalik, with an insatiable thirst.

The Babadook first appears in a pop-up book, devoid of both author and publisher, that Samuel finds in his bedroom. In the movie's most inspired scene, filmed in stop-motion, the Babadook's plans are clarified in a flurry of paper cutouts. In order to scare, he does not even need to leave the page. (Most children will verify this.) Once he does leave, though, and starts hammering on doors, battle is joined, and Amelia, hitherto pale and friable, acquires fresh energy, sprinting upstairs, swinging from lintels, and trying some hammering of her own. As to what the Babadook may stand for, take your pick: survivor's guilt, husband's ghost, all-consuming grief, a child possessed, or a mother drained of sleep—almost of the will to live—by that child's unceasing demands. No male director would have put so much as a toe inside this trouble zone, although Kent does borrow a helpful domestic hint from "Shaun of the Dead": rather than vanquish our worst nightmare, why not tame it, lock it away, and hope? ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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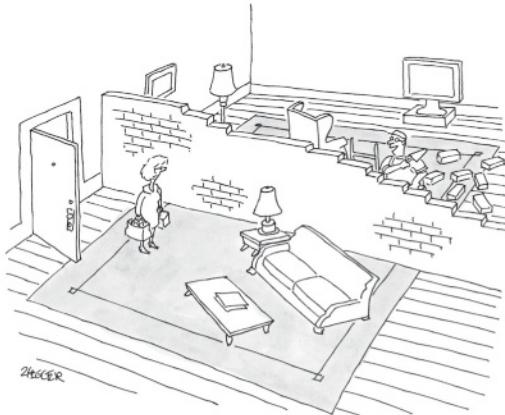
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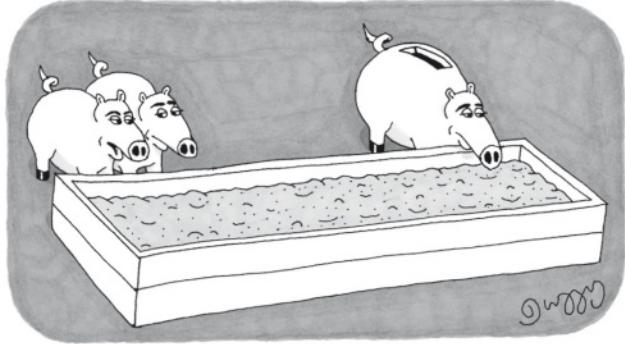
## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Zachary Kanin, must be received by Sunday, November 30th. The finalists in the November 17th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 15th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*"I think we should stop seeing each other."*  
Anthony Nelson, Brisbane, Australia



### THE FINALISTS

*"His surgery paid for itself."*  
Don Symons, Santa Barbara, Calif.

*"This little piggy owns the market."*  
James Williams, Uki, Australia

*"Get a hammer."*  
John Beaudoin, DeKalb, Ill.

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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